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BEARDSICLES

Calgarian PJ Lavergne snapped this picture of the frosty buildup on his beard during his commute to work Tuesday morning in northeast Calgary. While thousands like Lavergne are able to cope with the bitter winter weather, some of the city's most vulnerable need a hand to manage during the deep freeze. Story, page 4. CONTRIBUTED

Changes to Alta. school tests expected

Assessment. Majority of Alberta students write exam purely intended to evaluate education system, not to impact grades

JEREMY NOLAIS
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Across-the-board standardized testing for Alberta students in grades 3, 6 and 9 will soon be a thing of the past, according to the education minister.

Jeff Johnson said he's directed staff in his ministry to begin exploring other ways to gather school and curriculum data currently provided through the provincial achievement test (PAT).

He said some parents and educators have suggested the testing be random, others believe it should be conducted at the beginning of the school semester instead of the end.

Questions have also been raised about whether the Grade 3 exams are appropriate at all.

"As we move forward with a more flexible curriculum and as technology advances, too, why can't the province's standardized assessment be infused right into the assessment the teacher does on a day-to-day basis?" Johnson said in an interview with Metro.

"Two things are certain — the PATs in their current form will not be here in the years to come, but we will have some form of standardized assessment because we believe in that."

Carol Henderson, president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, welcomed change to a testing format she believes is extremely dated.

"Certainly, a 30-year-old test is not going to support the kind of learning we want children to be exposed to," she said. "That's the problem solving, the creativity, the innovation and working together and just learning to be good citizens."

Johnson pledged to begin changes before the next provincial election and said he would likely start with the youngest students.

Research

- Shelleyann Scott, an associate professor with the University of Calgary, urged caution on changing the PAT model. She's worked on a multi-university panel for two years looking at assessments done in the province and said many administrators welcome the annual testing as a measure of their own school's standing.

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Memorial.
Judge calls for protocol to be named after patient

Andres Martinez's death during a routine appendix operation in 2010 has already led to numerous changes in hospital policy, and a new report suggests honouring his memory further.

"It would be most appropriate to recognize the Martinez family in some fashion by renaming the Family Support Protocol," judge Michael Dinkel wrote in a fatality-inquiry report released Tuesday.

That protocol was specifically developed to prevent the confusion and delays the Martinez family experienced in getting information regarding 24-year-old Andres' condition following unexpected complications with his surgery, according to the report.

Patient advocate Deborah Prowse, who represented Andres' father Eugenio during the inquiry, agreed that the protocol should be renamed after Andres.

"I think a tribute to him would be very appropriate," she said. "Anyone who has lost a family member to medical care, you find ways of memorializing them, so I think that would be important to them."

According to the inquiry report, Andres died after his surgeon sliced an abdominal artery using an instrument described as a "disposable trocar" after the physician's preferred instrument, a "reusable trocar," was not immediately available in the operating room.

The incident led to numerous changes when it comes to operating-room procedures as well as the creation of the Family Support Protocol, which provides 24-hour access to social workers for families and dedicated waiting areas near operating rooms.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Safe-communities centre to pull together 150 agencies this June

Police beamed Tuesday as they confirmed a centre aiming to bridge the gap between social agencies and struggling Calgarians will open June 18.

The Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Centre will be housed inside the old police administration building, located at 316–7th Ave. S.E., and feature assistance from 150 agencies, Insp. Curtis Olson said. Among those included are the City of Calgary, Alberta Health Services and The Calgary Drop-In Centre.

Olson said the venue will provide a clear path for police attempting to aid residents suffering from issues such as addiction or mental illness that are better served outside the justice system.

Police Chief Rick Hanson previously touted the facility in a year-end interview with Metro in December.

"Most people like it when we arrest the bad guy, but they would rather the offence was never committed," he said at the time. JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

Police Chief Rick Hanson said he has pushed for a venue like the Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Centre for years. METRO FILE

Not one Idle No More complaint yet: Police

Investigation.
Could still take weeks to see if charges will be laid in blockade of 14th Street Bridge

JEREMY NOLAIS
jeremy.nolais@metronews.ca

By and large, hundreds joining in Calgary Idle No More demonstrations have been peaceful and forthcoming with their plans, police said on Tuesday.

In fact, representatives with the city's oversight commission were told in a meeting that the service has not received a single formal complaint from the public over the course of 15 local events run under the brand, which have included everything from circle dances in city hall to an hours-long blockade of the 14th Street Bridge.

But that blockade on Jan. 12 left Merle Terlesky complaining of what he views as a double-standard that has seen other protesters arrested for far less.

Terlesky raised similar issues with the Occupy Calgary movement, which saw members camp out in Olympic Plaza for two months in late 2011.

"Nobody likes the price of gas, but I can't just go stand in the middle of Deerfoot (Trail) and demand lower prices," he said.

Gaining steam?

- **Numbers.** Protesters pointed to a large turnout at Monday's events, which drew a combined 400 people, as proof the movement is not fading.
- **Response.** The Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police have recently discussed strategies for dealing with the protests, which have included blockades of highways north of Calgary.

An Idle No More protester speaks during a demonstration at Olympic Plaza on Monday, likely the group's largest event to date in Calgary. METRO FILE

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Province takes action.
Rule changes could curb electricity charges

The Alberta government is changing the rules on how consumers buy electricity to try to rein in soaring power bills.

Energy Minister Ken Hughes says the two-thirds of Albertans who buy their electricity off the wholesale market will now be able to buy it four months in advance.

Previously, consumers of the regulated rate option could only buy their power a month and a half in advance.

Hughes says the change will give consumers a chance to average prices over a longer period of time and avoid debilitating price spikes brought on by things like severely cold weather.

The remaining third of Alberta's power consumers buy their electricity on fixed-rate contracts from retailers.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Panel recommendations

Hughes was reacting to the recommendations of an independent panel set up by the government almost a year ago after Albertans were hit with skyrocketing power bills.

School trustee

Education-watchdog chair announces candidacy

The chair of a Calgary education watchdog group is throwing his hat in the ring for school trustee.

Larry Leach with the Association for Responsive Trusteeship launched his campaign Tuesday to represent wards 5 and 10 in this October's election.

"I want to bring a culture of transparency to the school board," Leach said in a release.

Current representative for the area Pamela King has yet to announce publicly if she will seek re-election. METRO

One hospitalized, many more at risk from sudden cold

Jordan Hamilton of the Calgary Drop-In and Rehab Centre shows off one of roughly 1,000 "Frosty Bites Kits" the centre has produced to help reduce cold-related injuries. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Flash freeze.
Temperatures were above zero as of 3 p.m. on Monday, but within 15 hours plunged to -22 C, feeling like -37 C with the wind chill

Cold snaps like the one that just descended on Calgary can be more than uncomfortable — they can be dangerous, potentially fatal.

A man was taken to hospital in critical condition after being found face-down and unconscious in the snow Tuesday morning, according to police.

"He was unresponsive, and he wasn't dressed for the elements," Insp. Darrell Hesse said. "He was transported to hospital with extreme hypothermia."

Sudden turns in the weather can be especially hazardous to homeless people, said Jordan Hamilton of the Calgary Drop-In Centre, particularly those "sleeping rough" outdoors.

Hamilton said Calgarians shouldn't hesitate to call 911 if they see someone sleeping outside in extreme cold.

"In temperatures like this, it is an emergency," Hamilton said. "We need to get that person inside."

The drop-in centre also began a proactive program this winter to prevent frostbite and cold-related injuries.

Program co-ordinator Mark Powers said roughly 1,000 "Frosty Bites Kits" have been prepared, containing gloves, tuques, lip balm, portable body warmers, and information about frostbite.

Of those, Powers said roughly 600 have already been handed out, but production of new kits has been halted for now because of a lack of gloves.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Quoted

"We're relying on the generosity of Calgarians to do the good work we do. We couldn't do it alone."

Jordan Hamilton of the Calgary Drop-In Centre on the facility's new "Frosty Bites Kits," which contain donated tuques, gloves and other items for the cold.

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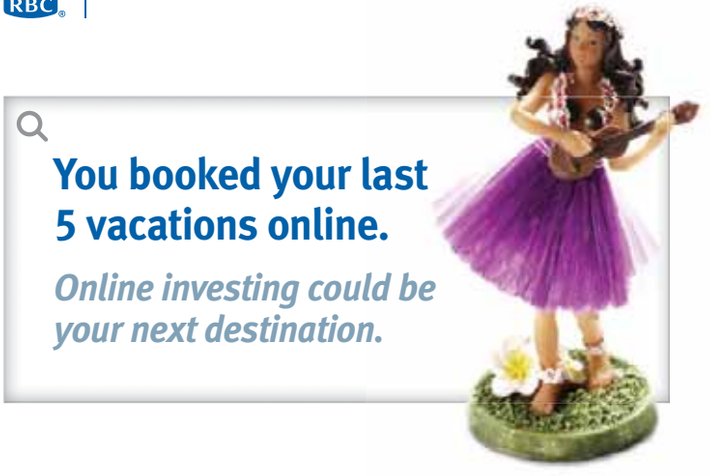

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Ernest Manning to host first CBE Arabic courses

Public-school officials have pegged a major southwest Calgary high school as the best venue for their first foray into Arabic language teaching and are hoping students will be quick to sign on.

Sheila McLeod, director of global learning for the Calgary Board of Education, said Tuesday the board hopes to offer Arabic courses out of Ernest Manning High School this fall and has recently obtained a course outline from Edmonton, which has run a full bilingual program that sees a 50-50 split between English and Arabic teaching for more than 25 years.

Students from Central Memorial High School and Western Canada High School would also be able to take the courses through a mix of online and in-class learning at Manning, McLeod said.

"We are hoping that we'll have a robust group of kids from a variety of high schools who will be ready to take it up come September," she said, adding a minimum of 25 students would be required to get the program off the ground this fall.

After a promising turnout at an open house, CBE officials originally explored a full bilingual Arabic program, but later said finding qualified staff was an issue.

McLeod conceded her team is still looking for a qualified professional capable of both developing and delivering the courses to students in grades 10, 11 and 12.

Calgary father Fouad Jomaa had long hoped to enrol his daughter Aisha in a full Arabic bilingual program. Reached Tuesday, he deemed the high-school courses a good first step.

"There's a lot more that needs to be done to get Arabic in the public school system at all levels," Jomaa said.

JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

Elham Merhi, left, and husband Fouad Jomaa originally hoped for the Calgary Board of Education to launch a full bilingual Arabic program so they could enrol their daughter Aisha. METRO FILE

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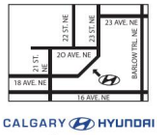

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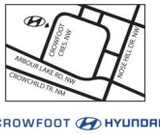

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Education. Redford's emphasis on 'applied research' draws concerns

Premier Alison Redford's comments about post-secondary research this week raised some eyebrows in academic circles.

In a "telephone town hall" with her party faithful, Redford said Alberta should "make sure our innovation and our research agenda is actually tied to applied research that we can use to commercialize and diversify our economy."

Jim Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, said Redford is "just fundamentally wrong" to put such an emphasis on applied research, when basic research has led to most major scientific advances.

Those advances often turn into profitable new industries, Turk said, but it's virtually impossible to predict which research streams will pay off.

Alison Redford METRO FILE

Calgary Mountain View MLA Dr. David Swann said the premier seems to be confusing researchers and technicians.

Academics won't want to come to Alberta if their own research agendas are not respected, Swann said.

Raphael Jacob of the University of Calgary Students' Union said the province should be able to set the agenda "to a certain degree," but it's a "fine line to walk" and universities also need to remain "academically pure."

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Online

For more news visit metronews.ca

Restaurant thefts

Police hunting for booze burglars

City police are looking for suspects in a series of break-ins at a northwest Calgary restaurant.

The first occurred Dec. 16 in the 5600 block of 4 Street NW, where police believe a number of suspects broke in and stole several bottles of booze.

According to police, the same restaurant was broken into on Jan. 6 around 5 a.m., and then again on Jan. 21 around 4:30 a.m.

Several bottles of liquor were taken in both of these instances.

Police are asking for the public's help and anyone with information can call the CPS District 3 office at 403-567-6300 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

METRO

A new Facebook page titled Calgary Compliments allows users to spread positive messages to people they've encountered. KATIE TURNER/METRO

Facebook page spreads the love

Social media. People are invited to send anonymous messages of positivity to Calgary Compliments

KATIE TURNER
katie.turner@metronews.ca

If someone has ever bought your coffee in the drive-thru or smiled at you kindly on the C-Train, here's your chance to send a positive message their way.

Calgary Compliments is a Facebook page started by a Calgarian who wishes to remain anonymous, much like the posts on the page.

"Essentially, a person who wants to post a compliment about anybody … such as a complete stranger, a bus driver or shop owner, they would message the page with the compliment, and the compliment … would get posted," explained the mystery man.

Anonymity is important to the page because it allows people to express themselves freely.

"If people know exactly who I am and they know me in real life, they might be reluctant to send a compliment," he said.

Launched last Thursday, the page has had several submissions.

"Hey guys, thanks for giving my girlfriend and I that cab ahead of you, outside of HiFi last night. You were 3 awesome and friendly strangers, and it was a kind and rare gesture to experience. We hope you all got home safe!" reads one message.

"Dear gentleman at the city hall station with the thick French accent and the polka-dot fedora, I may not have been able to understand you very well when you asked if I needed help, but thank you very much for helping me retrieve all of my items after my briefcase exploded. Sincerely, Une femme très reconnaissants," reads another.

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Scores of dead bodies dumped in Syrian city

Nationwide violence. Various sources put the number killed on Tuesday at around 160

The bodies of at least 65 people were found in Syria's northern city of Aleppo Tuesday as the government and rebels blamed each other for the mass killing.

The bodies, almost all men in their 20s and 30s, were discovered in the contested neighbourhood of Bustan al-Qasr, according to Rami Abdul-Rahman, director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Intense clashes between rebels and government troops have raged in the district since opposition forces launched an offensive on Aleppo in July.

Abdul-Rahman said the identities of the dead were unknown and it was not clear who was behind the killings. A government official told The Associated Press that the dead were residents of Bustan al-Qasr.

Syrian state TV said the men were killed by members of Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qaida-linked group. It said the men were killed after they demanded members of the group to leave their areas.

An activist group, the Local Co-ordination Committees, put the number of bodies at 80. It blamed government forces for the killing.

The same day, a bomb wounded Abdul-Razzak Qtini, once governor of the province of Hama, as he was in his car, said Abdul-Rahman and a neighbour of Qtini.

Earlier Tuesday, rebels stormed a government intelligence complex in the east, freeing at least 11 people held in a prison there, activists said.

Regime warplanes also carried several airstrikes on rebel positions in restive towns and villages around Damascus, the Observatory said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Protesters demand blood for blood in India

Protesters gathered near India's Parliament on Tuesday, demanding the death penalty for six men accused in the fatal gang rape of a young woman on a bus in New Delhi last month. The protesters carried placards saying, "Give us Justice, Hang the Rapists," and shouted slogans before conducting a mock hanging of the men who are facing trial in a special court in New Delhi. Meanwhile, India's Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected a petition to move the trial out of New Delhi. The petition argued that the men would not get a fair trial because of the charged atmosphere in the capital. ALTAF QADRI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brazil

Police link cheap flares to blaze

Penny-pinching by a band known for its pyrotechnic displays may have cost more than 230 people their lives at a nightclub in southern Brazil, according to a police inspector leading the investigation into this weekend's blaze.

Inspector Marcelo Arigony told reporters at a news conference Tuesday that the outdoor flares cost a mere $1.25 a piece, compared to the $35 price tag for an indoor flare. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Egypt

Army chief fears fall into anarchy

The head of Egypt's military has warned the nation may collapse under the weight of its turmoil.

However, Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi signalled he would not move to put down protesters, saying troops are in a "grave predicament," forced to balance "avoiding confrontation" with citizens and protecting state institutions. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Release the hounds.
Metro reporter discovers first-hand what it's like to be buried under snow

MATT KIELTYKA
Metro in Vancouver

The Canadian Avalanche Rescue Dog Association's Sadie pokes her head through the snow during a rescue simulation in Revelstoke, B.C., on Jan. 8.
MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

DAY 3
THE RESCUERS

Tomorrow: Staying Alive
Metro takes you to school on how to survive in treacherous terrain.

The only sound I hear is that of my own body breathing in and out.

It's been that way since I climbed into a snug hole carved into the side of Revelstoke Mountain Resort in B.C., and flashed a "thumbs-up" sign to ski patrol.

As I lay there in the fetal position, the patroller covered my one escape with large slabs of snow and ice.

"Are you OK? I'm going to fill in the cracks with snow now," he says.

The outside world is silent for the next 15 minutes, although everyone on the surface says they keep trying to communicate with me.

I can't tell.

Today, I've been put in the role of an avalanche victim.

• • •

Al Roberts and his faithful companion, Sadie, a seven-year-old Belgian shepherd cross, bide their time in the kennel atop the ski hill when Roberts hears "go ahead" over the static on his radio.

Sadie knows it's time to work.

She leaps out of her cage and barks excitedly as Roberts steps into his ski bindings and starts descending the mountain.

In a few minutes, they'll be at the site of a simulated avalanche where a "victim" is buried underneath a pile of snow.

To the naked eye, it's impossible to tell where I'm buried.

Sadie impatiently paces back and forth as they reach the bottom of the run.

"Are you ready to go to work?" Roberts works Sadie up into a frenzy. "Search!"

• • •

The sound of my breathing is joined by a faint rustle overhead.

Although I'm not in real danger, my spirit soars on a gust of optimism as rustling turns to scratching and scratching turns to the distinct sounds of paws digging through snow and hurried panting.

Bits of snow come free and sprinkle down on me as the sounds get louder.

Suddenly an entire block comes down and I see Sadie's wet nose poke through the opening.

She barks, grabs the old, raggedy sweater I'm holding in my left hand and starts tugging at it, helping me as I claw my way out of the cold prison with my free arm.

Roberts, his boots crunching on fresh powder as he races toward us, keeps Sadie motivated.

"What did you find? There's a good girl, good girl."

• • •

It was a minute and 30 seconds from the time Roberts shouted "Search!" to the moment Sadie homed in on my scent and started digging for me.

Sadie and her owner, Al Roberts, have been CARDA-validated for five years, and in that time they've honed their rescue skills.
MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

Roberts explains that, when responding to an avalanche, he and Sadie, like all members of the Canadian Avalanche Rescue Dog Association (CARDA), are able to cover six times more ground than a team of human searchers — in a fraction of the time.

The effectiveness of rescue dogs can't be overstated.

"When you're buried, every second counts," is the tagline used on CARDA's website.

Once on scene, Roberts's job is to see which direction the wind is coming from and send Sadie into it.

"The scent of the person comes out of the snow just like smoke would out of a hole. It takes the path of least resistance, out of the snow and into the wind," he explains.

"Once the dog gets into the scent cone, they can pinpoint where it's coming from. You can see their head just snap back and you can tell there's something there. They become more intent on finding where the scent is coming from, and as soon as they find it in the ground they just dive right in."

And anyone buried underneath is usually glad they do.

Avalanche-control forecaster Troy Leahy and his rescue dog, Penny, are two of the most

Exclusively online

Visit metronews.ca/buriedalive for more from Avalanche Week, including what happened when Sadie the rescue dog saved our reporter after a simulated avalanche.

Sadie
MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

Veteran Revelstoke Search and Rescue volunteers Zuzana Driediger, right, and Buck Corrigan say self-rescue is the norm when avalanches hit in the backcountry. MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

Search-and-rescue volunteers

When a fatal avalanche strikes in the B.C. backcountry, search-and-rescue volunteers are the ones who face the grim task of recovering the bodies.

Situated in what is known as the "powder belt," and boasting the most vertical ski resort in North America, Revelstoke is home to a huge contingent of highly experienced search-and-rescuers.

Buck Corrigan, a veteran manager at Revelstoke Search and Rescue (SAR) who helps co-ordinate a team of about 60, says that, despite the high seasonal risk, avalanche calls aren't that common. Thanks to the proliferation of knowledge and more people than ever carrying avalanche kits, he gets perhaps one or two per season.

"We went to one last year, and it was over before we got there," he says. "The local group had done a self-rescue, and there was one fatality and by the time we got there it was over. They had recovered the fatality.

"In this part of the world, it's just accepted that you don't go out without a certain amount of equipment."

When an avalanche call does come in, it's automatically relayed to the experts, day or night, who then rally at a muster station. The SAR team will include a technician to do a risk assessment, paramedics, avalanche-rescue dogs, and a helicopter and heli-sling technicians.

Zuzana Driediger is a part-time Revelstoke SAR volunteer with 20 years' experience. She says some calls are more stressful than others — such as the Size 3.5 avalanche (on a zero-to-five scale) that killed two men in 2010 while 200 snowmobilers were attending an annual

the rescue

familiar faces for skiers at Revelstoke Mountain Resort in B.C. MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

pros at keeping calm in crisis

Quoted

"You kind of accept it that that's part of the game in the mountains."

Zuzana Driediger, Revelstoke Search and Rescue volunteer, acknowledging the toll that fatalities can take in her line of work

competition at nearby Boulder Mountain.

She recalled that at one point crews had to stop a man from building a bonfire and pouring gas on it, because the smoke was impeding rescue helicopters. She spent three days on the scene with her avalanche-rescue dog, Hero, who used his keen sense of smell to help ensure the site was clear and no one was still buried.

"I personally try to stay calm and collected and just look at the big picture and focus on safety first and what's important," she said of how she copes in a crisis.

"At the time I'm not very emotional. I just focus on the task at hand, but sometimes, yeah, it does affect you later on if there's fatalities involved, but you kind of accept it that that's part of the game in the mountains."

Emergency Management BC reimburses all volunteer search-and-rescue groups for the costs of each rescue, while community organizations help raise money for new equipment.

KATE WEBB/METRO IN VANCOUVER

K9 heroes

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

The CARDA dogs of Revelstoke

1 Penny

Four-year-old Labrador/ golden retriever cross

Handler: Tory Leahy
Bio: While Leahy, an avalanche-control forecaster at Revelstoke Mountain Resort, is out ensuring the ski hills are safe for the public, Penny usually isn't too far behind.

2 Hero

Five-year-old German shepherd

Handler: Zuzana Driediger
Bio: As part of Revelstoke Search and Rescue, Hero's most notable mission was responding to the aftermath of the 2010 avalanche at Boulder Mountain during a snowmobiling event that involved more than 200 sledders.

3 Sadie

Seven-year-old Belgian shepherd cross

Handler: Al Roberts
Bio: A well-trained dog with a keen nose, Sadie is also a fan favourite on the slopes, especially when surprised skiers watch her jump onto a chair lift on her own.

About CARDA

Born out of a loose but long-standing partnership between the RCMP, Parks Canada and the ski industry, the Canadian Avalanche Rescue Dog Association officially formed in 1982 as a non-profit volunteer organization. There are currently 28 validated CARDA teams (each made up of an owner and a dog) active in British Columbia, Alberta and Yukon Territory. Teams must be revalidated each year and must attend a winter training course at least every other year.

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO IN VANCOUVER

In New York, RIM set for big reveal

A BlackBerry is born. Wednesday's launch marks start of ad blitz to keep hype alive

After several technical blunders, two unexpected delays and one major shakeup in its leadership, BlackBerry maker Research In Motion is about to raise the curtain for its new smartphone devices in hopes that consumers share the excitement.

The unveiling of the phones and operating system on Wednesday marks the start of an advertising blitz that will stretch to social media, the Super Bowl and beyond as RIM tries to regain the cool factor that was once firmly in its grasp.

If all goes according to plan, the event will also mark the end of a troublesome 12 months that has seen RIM try to stay afloat while its future was constantly in question by outsiders, and its stock price tumbled to the lowest level in about a decade.

A prototype of the new BlackBerry 10 operating system seen last fall.
GETTY IMAGES FILE

Online

Visit metronews.ca for live coverage of the BB10 launch.

While the first hurdles to overcome on Wednesday are the opinions of tech analysts and investor reaction, the true measure of success — actual sales of the phones — is still weeks away.

As a crowd of thousands gathers Wednesday at Pier 36, a massive entertainment venue on the shores of Manhattan, chief executive Thorsten Heins will step onto the stage holding the BlackBerry that has been at once considered the company's last hope, but also its biggest hurdle.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hey! Where'd Beijing go?

A cyclist passes a flag-raising ceremony during severe pollution at Tiananmen Square on Tuesday in Beijing. Thick, off-the-scale smog shrouded eastern China for the second time in about two weeks, forcing airlines to cancel flights because of poor visibility and prompting Beijing to temporarily shut factories and curtail fleets of government cars. The U.S. embassy reported an hourly peak level of PM2.5 — tiny particulate matter that can penetrate deep into the lungs — at 526 micrograms per cubic metre, or "beyond index." Over a 24-hour period, readings were more than 20 times higher than World Health Organization safety levels. FENG LI/GETTY IMAGES

An Oscar statue handed out last year.
GETTY IMAGES FILE

This year, a Canadian firm is in charge of little gold men

Every year at the Academy Awards, the big question is: Who does the Oscar go to?

This year, there's a new one to trip up trivia buffs: Where does the Oscar come from?

For the first time in its venerable history, Hollywood's most prestigious accolade is being manufactured under the watch of a Canadian company.

St. Regis Crystal, of Markham, purchased Oscar's Chicago-based manufacturer R.S. Owens last December and with it, R.S. Owens' 30-year tradition of making the internationally recognized gold-plated statues.

Company decisions now come from southern Ontario, but the Oscars are still being made at the Chicago foundry, says St. Regis vice president Jeff Firkser.

"We purchased the company for its talent and for the stature they have in Chicago," Firkser says of R.S. Owens, which also makes trophies for the Emmy Awards and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Awards.

"This particular award is a cast award and it's not going to change. It's going to always be done there."

That guarantee was key to sealing the new partnership, says the president of R.S. Owens, Scott Siegel.

Firkser says he had never seen an Oscar up close until taking over R.S. Owens. "The weight of it is quite surprising. It's a lot heavier than it looks," he says of the trophy. In fact, the Oscar weighs 3.8 kilograms and stands just more than 34 centimetres high.

At its core is britannium, a pewter-like alloy that is poured by hand into a steel mould. The figure is ground, sanded and polished, and then plated several times — first with copper, then nickel, then silver and finally, heavy 24-karat gold.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Consumer confidence. While Canucks look on sunny side, Americans are now glum

Canadian and U.S. consumers appear to be heading in opposite directions in terms of their confidence in the economy going forward — it's up in Canada and down south of the border.

The Conference Board of Canada's survey on consumer confidence in January shows the index rebounding strongly by 5.1 points to 83.1, the highest level since June 2011 and the first increase in four months. A similar survey by the Conference Board in the United States found confidence among consumers there plummeted this month to 58.6, the lowest level since November 2011.

The results are baffling given that most economists believe the U.S. is on the verge of a relatively strong economic performance in 2013, while the expectations for Canada — while not negative — are more modest. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Roast renaming

Give that blonde a makeover

The days of ordering up a tall blonde at your local Starbucks may be drawing to an end. The company is looking for suggestions to rename its blonde roast, currently called Veranda Blend, through a Canada-wide online contest that runs until Feb. 10. The winning moniker will go on Canadian menus and packaging. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Market Minute

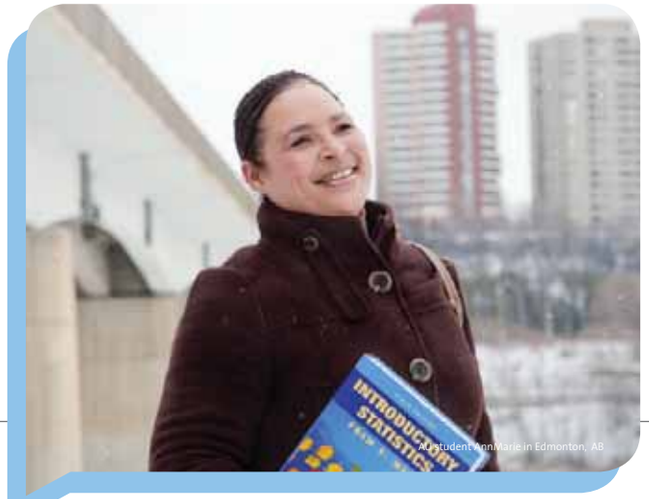
DOLLAR 99.76¢ (+0.41¢)

TSX 12,830.56 (+14.64)

OIL $97.57 US (+$1.13)

GOLD $1,660.80 US (+$7.90)

Natural gas: $3.26 US (-3¢)
Dow Jones: 13,954.42 (+72.49)



AU student AnnMarie in Edmonton, AB

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GO LEGLESS AND GET AHEAD THIS YEAR

JUST SAYIN'
Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Back in the bad old days when everyone in Canada was nearly Scottish, there was one New Year, Jan. 1, and that was it.

Today's infinitely more diverse (and interesting) times mean you have multiple opportunities to slough off the old year — like the skin of a snake — and begin anew.

And wouldn't you know? Coming up, on Feb. 10, it's the Year of the Snake for followers of the lunar calendar.

The snake is the sixth sign in the Chinese zodiac, and snake years happen in intervals of 12. Last year was a dragon year, which you might argue is a more impressive member of the reptile family, but don't sell the snake short.

2013

Never stab a snake in the back, because a snake never forgets and always gets the last word.

The snake (in short) is good at, and for, business. This year is specifically a year of the water snake, which means, according to various Chinese astrologers, those born under the sign are influential, insightful, intellectual, motivated and determined to succeed. Snakes keep to themselves, don't talk much and are smarter than you. When you're together in the boardroom, you really want to know what they're thinking but you haven't the faintest idea.

Snakes make great scientists and investigators. They're relentless.

Never stab a snake in the back, because a snake never forgets and always gets the last word.

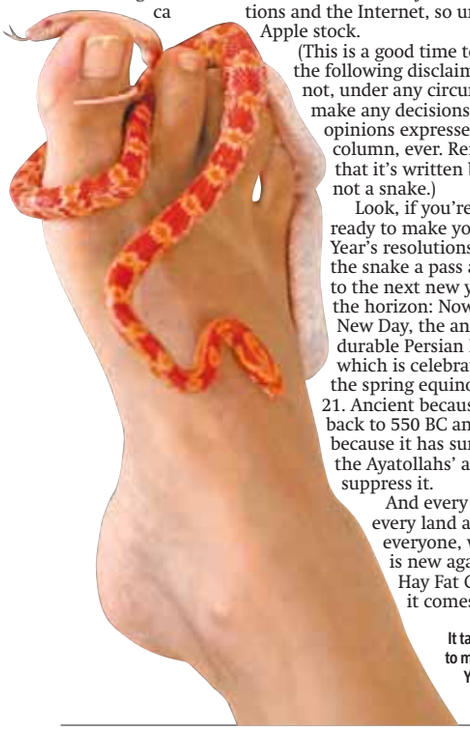
What's sauce for the snake is swamp water for the tiger, e.g., yours truly. Tigers and snakes are on completely different paths. If you have a snake in the house, you will never go hungry. If you have a tiger curled up in front of the fireplace, you're safe. Just don't expect them to get along.

Knowing your snakes from your tigers can be useful for making bold predictions about the coming year. According to geomancer and philosopher Paul Ng of Richmond Hill, Ont., the Year of the Snake will be a good year for water-oriented businesses, such as fishing, but also a good year for metal and earth industries, such as real estate, except in Scarborough, Mississauga and Vancouver. It will be a bad year for communications and the Internet, so unload that Apple stock.

(This is a good time to issue the following disclaimer: do not, under any circumstances, make any decisions based on opinions expressed in this column, ever. Remember that it's written by a tiger, not a snake.)

Look, if you're still not ready to make your New Year's resolutions, just give the snake a pass and go to the next new year on the horizon: Nowruz, or New Day, the ancient and durable Persian New Year, which is celebrated on the spring equinox, March 21. Ancient because it goes back to 550 BC and durable because it has survived even the Ayatollahs' attempts to suppress it.

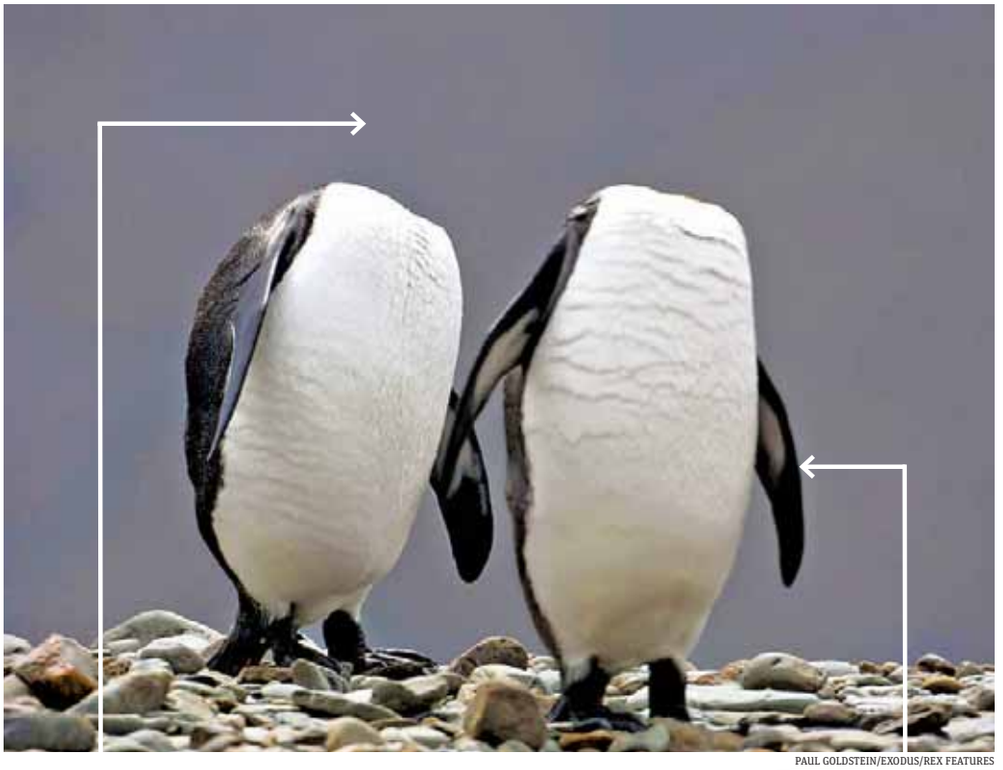
And every year, in every land and for everyone, what's old is new again. Gung Hay Fat Choy, when it comes!



It takes a real snake to make a bold New Year's prediction.

GETTY IMAGES

Heads off to you, Pingu



PAUL GOLDSTEIN/EXODUS/REX FEATURES

Wildlife photography

Not a good time to lose one's head

It appears that penguins can be camera-shy, too.

Wildlife photographer Paul Goldstein took this amusing image of two seemingly headless king penguins at St. Andrews Bay on the British territory of South Georgia. As it turned out, the flightless birds were using their double-jointed necks to bend their heads backward. **METRO**

Photographer's viewpoint

"Initially I was just glad to be able to isolate a couple of these to photograph. It is so difficult normally as there are a quarter of a million others to clutter the background."

Paul Goldstein, photographer and tour guide for travel company Exodus

Never get a head

Keeping composure is tough to do

The London, England-based photographer recalls his encounter with the playful pair.

"One penguin had reverted to normal by the time I got the camera up but then it hid its head again, and its mate did it too," Goldstein said. "I just managed to keep the camera still enough as I was laughing so much — to them it is a perfectly normal manoeuvre, but to me — not so." **METRO**

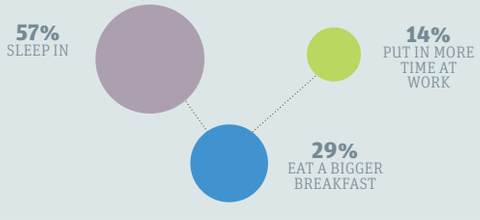
South Georgia Island

- **Location.** Sits 1,390 kilometres to the east of the Falkland Islands.
- **Population.** Approximately 2.23 million pairs of king penguins, with numbers rising. No human population.
- **Life.** Cold, highly-oxygenated waters promote marine life. Krill, the shrimp-like crustaceans at the base of the food chain, thrive here.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

What would you do with extra time shaved from your daily commute?



Twitter

@kimfergusson:
"-18, feels like -37 with the windchill" oh that's great....said no one ever. #yyc #snow #brr

@klernz:
I'd say the head structure in front of the bow is a littttttttle bit creepy #yyc

@Oh_oceandee:
When its so cold my eyes water and the tears freeze to my face. #brr #yyc

@ikourt:
Calgary had two speeds on the Deerfoot: autobahn and gridlock #yyc

@CameraguyRob:
Love hearing the seasonal pings of gravel off my windshield on the Deerfoot. #YYC

@leggomagreggo:
It's so cold in #yyc today, I saw a polar bear drinking a large double-double. #canada #tims #badumbum

metro

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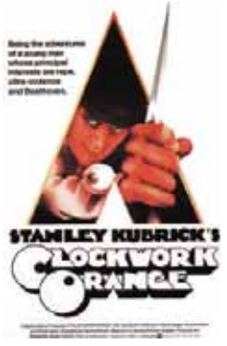
SCENE 2

Cineplex resurrects classic films in high-def

Some films cited as classics can be enjoyed as historical artifacts, more appreciated for their aesthetics and less for their urgent, contemporary effect. But the spate of motion pictures selected to be screened as part of Cineplex's fourth annual The Great Digital Film Festival are rare in that they are indeed landmark movies and play as good today — if not better — than they did in their respective eras. Running at select Cineplex theatres from Feb. 1 to 7, the Great Digital Film Festival programmers are spotlighting sumptuous new high-def prints. Here are a few of Metro's primo picks.

CHRIS ALEXANDER
scene@metronews.ca



A Clockwork Orange (1971)

As disturbing and viscerally alive as ever, Kubrick's razor-sharp satire is a must see big-screen experience. Malcolm McDowell is ultraviolence personified, Wendy Carlos' music still chills and the director's trademark dissonance has never been more prominent.

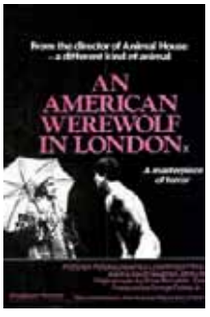
Exclusively online

Cynthia Loyst, a host of InnerSPACE, breaks down genres you don't want to miss at metronews.ca.

Jaws (1975)

The film that sparked the template for the contemporary Hollywood blockbuster, Spielberg's iconic and terrifying chomp on Peter Benchley's killer shark book is a perfect film, from stem to stern (of the Orca, natch).

From the performances (Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, Richard Dreyfuss) to John Williams' double bass note driven score, JAWS is an epic, genre defying gem.



An American Werewolf in London (1981)

"Stay clear of the moors." A wiser warning never spoken in cinema and it's a shame the heroes of John Landis's maverick comedic shocker don't heed it. Then again, if they did we wouldn't have this visionary blend of humour and horror; part tragedy, part love story and jolted by Rick Baker's Oscar winning prosthetic man-to-wolf transformation sequences that have never, ever been bettered. This writer, for one, cannot wait to hear that blood-curdling howl screaming digitally from the screen.

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)

The first and best of the Indiana Jones films, this mega-hit is another rousing, vintage Spielberg adventure classic, one that demands to be seen on a gigantic screen.

Who needs 3D when that monstrous boulder comes crashing through the cave in the films' much copied opening sequence? This one is a generational right of passage. Take the kids.

Casino (1995)

The same creative team behind the much-lauded gangster drama Goodfellas (Scorsese and writer Nicholas Pileggi) re-teamed for this sprawling look at the dark side of mafia-ruled Las Vegas circa the '60s and '70s and though it's been called inferior to its predecessor, a second (or third or fourth) look might change some tunes. Robert DeNiro's best performance bumps up against Joe Pesci's mania, but the real treat is Sharon Stone as a playgirl who malfunctions with Shakespearean aplomb. Amazing pop music score too.

Bradley Cooper. ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Bradley Cooper back pedals on Armstrong movie

Despite telling BBC News earlier this month that he'd be up for starring in a J.J. Abrams-produced biopic on disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong, Oscar-nominee Bradley Cooper insists he's not interested.

"Oh my God, that's so nuts," Cooper tells Access Hollywood, adding that he "had no idea what (the interviewer) was talking about" during the red carpet chat.

Dazed and confused

"(I) had no idea what (the interviewer) was talking about."

Bradley Cooper
Talking about being confused over a question on the Lance Armstrong movie

"I didn't even know that J.J. ... has the rights. I had no idea."

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Stay classy Brandi Glanville

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Holy cats, you guys. Brandi Glanville is insane. How do we know this (besides reading every tabloid story ever)? Let me present to you some excerpts from the The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills star's new book, Drinking & Tweeting and other Brandi Blunders, which were obtained by Life & Style.

Her reaction after finding out about her then-husband, Edward Cibrian's, affair with LeAnn Rimes: "I'm not entirely sure how I ended up on the floor of my closet sobbing ... a teary-eyed Eddie found me lying there minutes later, and without saying so much as a word, he started kissing me all over ... he pulled off my workout pants and we started having sex right there," she recalls. "He swore up and down my body that it wasn't true ... that it was completely innocent. In that moment, it was easier to believe him, because I just couldn't stand the thought of being without him."

How she would go about her revenge: "A brand-new vagina would be an Eddie-free vagina. ... I decided that since Eddie had ruined my vagina for me, he could pay for a new one. I gave (the doctor's office) Eddie's credit card number," she says about undergoing a vaginal rejuvenation for $12,000.

But, really, no hard feelings: "I would like to thank my ex-husband, Edward Cibrian, for giving me all the material I could ever need to write this book and for helping me discover the strong, independent woman inside of me," she writes, in Drinking & Tweeting, which will surely be a New York Times bestseller.

Quoted

"I'm not entirely sure how I ended up on the floor of my closet sobbing."

Brandi Glanville

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It's expensive to be a tourist in a town that's hosting two of the biggest events of the new year — Mardi Gras and the NFL Super Bowl — but New Orleans has plenty of free things to do. The nearly 300-year-old French city has walkable neighbourhoods and scenic public parks dotted with centuries-old oak trees draped in Spanish moss, along with a free ferry and historic market.

PHOTOS AND STORY: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

5 Free things to do in New Orleans

Mardi Gras and Bourbon Street

New Orleans is perhaps best-known for hosting one of the biggest free parties in the world: Mardi Gras. The Carnival season includes parades with costumed riders, marching bands and decorated floats, but it only lasts a few weeks. Visitors can get a taste of the madness and revelry of Carnival any time of year on Bourbon Street, the city's most famous thoroughfare, where scantily-clad women beckon patrons from strip club doorways and beads are flung from balconies to revellers down below year-round. It's also a hot spot for live music, which spills out onto the street from clubs with doors and windows flung open. And finally, Bourbon Street is a the one place where a costume can be flaunted any time of year.

Jackson Square

Artists painting on canvas, clowns making balloon animals, street performers and jazz musicians are among the free entertainment to be found in Jackson Square, a one-block section of the French Quarter anchored by a lush green space with benches set amid gardens and grand oak trees. The square is bordered by pedestrian-only walkways with restaurants, storefronts and upper-level balconies boasting decorative ironwork. Benches allow visitors to take in the architecture of the square's historic buildings, including the Cabildo and Pontalba Apartments, believed to be among the oldest apartment buildings in the country. Visitors are also welcome at St. Louis Cathedral, a place of worship for Catholics since the 1720s. jackson-square.com

City Park

City Park is the largest green space in New Orleans, with more than 1,300 acres of gardens, lagoons and walking trails set amid centuries-old oak trees draped in Spanish moss and filled with birds. The New Orleans Museum of Art is located in the park, and while there's a fee to enter the museum, just beyond the museum are dozens of art objects you can see for free in the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden. The sculptures, valued at more than $25 million, can be viewed in a relaxing setting that includes meandering footpaths, pedestrian bridges and reflecting lagoons. Among the artists represented are Antoine Bourdelle, Gaston Lachaise, Henry Moore, Jacques Lipchitz, Barbara Hepworth and Seymour Lipton. neworleanscitypark.com.

Mississippi River Ferry

A boat ride is one of the best ways to get a look at the New Orleans skyline and the Mississippi River's daily parade of river barges, steamships and cruise ships. The Algiers Point ferry, which has been in operation since the early 1800s, is free to pedestrians. It runs every 30 minutes between the landing at the foot of Canal Street near the Aquarium of the Americas and the historic Algiers Point neighbourhood directly across the river from the French Quarter. Algiers Point, established in 1719, boasts a trove of historic Victorian-style homes, magnolia tree-lined streets with several parks, cafés, historic churches and bars with live music. But perhaps its best feature is an unobstructed view of the city's skyline and river traffic.

French Market

The smell of sweet pralines and freshly-brewed coffee wafts through the air of the New Orleans French Market. The centuries-old commercial hub stretches for several city blocks along the banks of the Mississippi River in the French Quarter and includes Cafe du Monde, home of the deep-fried, sugar-coated beignet, a popular New Orleans pastry. The market is a mix of open-air retail spaces dotted with produce stands and enclosed stores carrying specialty clothing and jewelry. It's an ideal destination for window shopping and people watching. The French Market dates to 1791 and was originally the site of a Native American trading post. European immigrants traded there, as did African-Americans selling coffee, pralines and calas.

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Mardi Gras brings baby dolls back

Century-old tradition.
Fat Tuesday's garter-clad women get their own exhibit

The "baby dolls," an on-again, off-again Mardi Gras tradition of New Orleans' African-American community, are on again.

The troupes of women strutting and prancing in bonnets, garters and skimpy or short, ruffled dresses on Fat Tuesday also are being spotlighted in a new book and museum exhibit that trace their history and modern rebirth.

When the predominantly African-American Zulu krewe hits the streets on Fat Tuesday — Feb. 12 — its marchers will include the Baby Doll Ladies, a troupe formed after hurricane Katrina. They play tambourines and cowbells to accompany their dance, a hip-hop style called bounce.

Though Mardi Gras celebrations date from the city's French founding in 1718, historians say the baby doll tradition started in 1912 when African American prostitutes who worked just outside the legal red-light district, called Storyville, dressed up on Mardi Gras to outdo their legal rivals.

Storyville was closed in 1917, but the baby doll costumes caught on and survived for decades in African-American neighbourhoods.

In the years of segregation, blacks celebrated Carnival in their neighbourhoods with informal parades of the brightly feathered and beaded Mardi Gras Indians, picnics and parties centred around the floats of the Zulu parade and costume traditions such as the baby dolls.

The end of segregation in the 1950s and '60s — and new economic opportunities — brought new avenues for African-Americans to participate in Mardi Gras. Debutante presentations at gala balls and more traditional float parades sprung up. And the revival of Lundi Gras celebrations the day before Mardi Gras brought together the monarch of the predominantly white Rex krewe to meet with the king of Zulu to toast the coming festival.

As times changed, the baby doll tradition faded.

But not everyone forgot the dolls, or what they meant to Carnival in New Orleans.

One new group — the 504 Eloquent Baby Dolls of New Orleans, named in part for a telephone area code — will march with a tribe of Mardi Gras Indians and the Skull and Bones club, maskers clad as skeletons in another revived black tradition.

"I've got a wonderful group of women who want to educate our youth, who want to bring our culture back to the streets of New Orleans," said Denise Trepagnier, a heavy crane operator and part-time seamstress who organized the group.

Around New Orleans neighbourhoods, you might catch a glimpse of other baby doll troupes with names like the Gold Digger Baby Dolls, the Treme Million Dollar Baby Dolls and the Ernie K-Doe Baby Dolls.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The baby doll tradition began in 1912 when African American, illegal prostitutes would dress up to outdo their legal rivals. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"I've got a wonderful group of women who want to educate our youth, who want to bring our culture back to the streets of New Orleans."

504 Eloquent Baby Dolls organizer Denise Trepagnier

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Try something a bit off-piste — Delirium Dive. COURTESY DAN HUDSON

Pick your own peak at Kicking Horse. SUPPLIED BY JANE MARSHALL

Behold the land of frozen pines and fresh powder

Ski escapes. These five spots offer something for families, weekend warriors and the true powder hounds

JANE MARSHALL
life@metronews.ca

Air scented with the resin of frozen pines, the feeling of carving your skis into a fast groomer and alpine vistas where saw-back peaks break the horizon. The mountains are calling...

Family-friendly skiing at Marmot Basin in Jasper

"The terrain (at Marmot) is probably the most balanced in western Canada, with 30 per cent green, 30 per cent blue, 20 per cent black and 20 per cent double black terrain," says Jeff Bartlet, Media and PR specialist for Tourism Jasper.

Marmot has a base and mid-mountain lodge, so if kids get cold it's never far to hot chocolate. It also offers nursery care for little ones 19 months and up, and lessons for children and adults. The overall feeling: cozy and comfortable with wild powder to be had.

Doing the Dive at Sunshine Village in Banff

Sunshine Village offers so much varied terrain that adrenaline begins to pump at the sight of an area map. And for experts, Sunshine holds a special delight: Delirium Dive. This off-piste area accessed from Lookout Mountain features more than 2,000 feet of vertical, a 40 degree average pitch and more than 600 acres of terrain. Skiers are required to carry beacons, probes and shovels and hike in groups of two or more. Check in with patrols at an access gate off the Continental Divide chair. Then it's a hike along a skinny ridge to drop into powdery heaven.

Luxurious Lake Louise in Lake Louise

The iconic Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise offers a dose of luxury to the ski experience. Think fine china, exquisite old-world charm and expansive views of the icy lake. The chateau sits on the edge of a lake that has captivated travellers for over a century.

For true luxury, eat a meal at the elegant Fairview Dining Room. Feast on local cuisine while taking in one of the world's best views.

Picking Peaks at Kicking Horse Mountain Resort in Golden, B.C.

Throwing our skis over a shoulder, my husband Mike and I followed one of the resort's senior patrollers, Steve Crowe, to explore some inbounds ridges.

"There's an amazing world that unfolds," says Matt Mosteller, VP of Marketing and Sales for Resorts of the Canadian Rockies. "For those looking to explore less accessible terrain, I recommend checking in with the patrols. They share a love of the mountains and can point people in the right direction."

Four hikes took us to the quiet cove of Bowl Over and to the peaks of Terminator, Blue Heaven (Whitewall), and Terminator 2. Views of the quartzite Purcells pop up like canines, the Bugaboos appear on the far horizon as blue bulges and the Rocky Mountains show off their steep, varied girth. This is double-black diamond terrain.

Local Style at Castle Mountain near Pincher Creek, Alta.

Quiet, big, steep mountains. Castle Mountain is a locals' haven. With hand-me-down chairlifts from Sunshine Village, an on-mountain hostel and $67 (adult) lift tickets, Castle is an affordable place to rip.

The Castle Mountain Ski Lodge and Hostel offers dorm rooms ($27 per person plus tax) as well as hotel rooms. This quaint spot is a short walk to the day lodge. This is where the prairie country meets the big mountains, an oft-forgotten spot that speaks of times past — both in terms of its lifts and its prices. Bring a pot of chili for the communal kitchen and go local for the weekend.

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Dried Apricot and Cherry Salsa makes perfect sidekick for turkey

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Most supermarkets now sell boneless turkey breast, which is leaner than chicken. A 3 1/2-ounce serving of chicken has about 140 calories and 3 grams of fat, while the same amount of turkey breast has 120 calories and 1 gram of fat!

If you can't find these cutlets, ask your grocer to slice boneless breast into scaloppini. Dusting it with flour keeps the turkey moist and dried fruit salsa is an ideal accompaniment.

Serve the scaloppini over Sweet Potato Mash, with grilled vegetables alongside.

Ingredients

- 4 turkey scaloppini
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp vegetable oil

Salsa

- 1/4 cup chopped dried apricots
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 1/3 cup diced green onions, white part only
- 1 tsp crushed fresh garlic
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 3 tbsp apricot jam
- 1 tbsp pure maple syrup
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp apple cider vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice

Garnish

- 3 tbsp chopped cilantro or parsley

1. Dust the turkey with flour. Spray a non-stick grill pan or skillet with cooking oil, add the vegetable oil and heat to medium. Sauté the turkey just until browned on both sides and no longer pink, about 8 minutes in total. Remove from the heat and keep covered.

2. To make the salsa, combine the apricots, cranberries, bell pepper, green onion, garlic, cilantro, jam, maple syrup, mustard and lemon juice.

3. Spoon the salsa over the turkey and garnish with cilantro or parsley. **ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN**

Turkey Scaloppini with Apricot and Dried Cherry Salsa

This recipes serves four. BRIAN MACDONALD, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

Drink of the Week

Frostbite

A mix of tequila, crème de cacao and blue curacao shaken with milk and garnished with maraschino cherries, this is the type of frostbite you'll want to get.

- 1 oz Jose Cuervo Silver Tequila
- .5 oz White Crème de Cacao
- .5 oz Blue Curacao
- 1 oz milk
- Garnish with cherries

Shake all ingredients with ice in shaker. Strain contents over fresh ice. Garnish with 2 cherries on a sword. Add a cocktail straw and serve.

PHOTO AND RECIPE COURTESY OF FIRKIN PUBS, FIRKINPUBS.COM

Add some Asian flare to Meatball Grinders

Hoisin is a thick, dark red-to-brown sauce used in Asian cooking that blends sweet-spicy-savoury flavours, a profile not all that different from ketchup. It is made from the leftover mash of fermented soy beans produced when making traditional soy sauces.

That mash is combined with sugar, chilies, garlic, vinegar, salt, sometimes five-spice powder and either flour or cornstarch (to thicken).

1. Heat oven to 425 F. Coat baking sheet with cooking spray.

2. In bowl, combine egg, cilantro, scallions, garlic, ginger, lime zest, hoisin and 1/2 tablespoon salt. Mix well. Add turkey, then knead well with your hands until evenly mixed. Add the breadcrumbs and mix again. Form mix into 20 balls.

3. In skillet over medium-high, melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Add half of the meatballs and brown on all sides, 5 mins. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet, then repeat with the remaining butter and meatballs.

4. Bake the meatballs for 7 to 8 minutes, or until cooked through and a thermometer inserted at the centre of a meatball reads 165 F.

5. Meanwhile, in a small bowl mix the tomatoes, Crème fraîche, hot sauce and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Spread a quarter of the mixture down the centre of each sub roll. When the meatballs are done, arrange 5 in each roll. Serve immediately. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

This recipe serves four. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ingredients

- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 scallions, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp grated fresh ginger
- Zest of 1 lime
- 1/4 cup hoisin
- Salt
- 1 1/3 lbs ground turkey
- 3/4 cup panko (Japanese-style) breadcrumbs
- 4 tbsp butter, divided
- 2 plum tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup crème fraîche
- 1 tsp hot sauce
- Four 6-inch sub rolls

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Dreaming of a post that will let you pursue your passion for travel? Mining may be the field for you

ASHLEIGH TRAHAN
TalentEgg.ca

Dig deep and ask yourself: is this the right career for you? FLICKR / RICK MCCHARLES

As a recruiter, I've searched for professionals to fill roles with clients across the globe, in a wide variety of industries.

One industry has truly stood out in terms of the opportunities it presents to work abroad: mining.

I've encountered mining engineers who have been able to work their way around the world on amazing projects in the most remote corners of the earth.

If you are looking to experience different countries and cultures, you should consider a career in mining!

You can certainly work for the head office of a mining company without leaving the confines of big cities like Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary. But if Bay Street isn't your style, a mining career could be your ticket to adventure in remote, rugged locations both in Canada and abroad.

For example, Canadian mining company Teck Resources has mine sites from the Red Dog zinc-lead mine in northwestern Alaska, to the Quebrada Blanca mine in northern Chile. Goldcorp's largest operation is their Red Lake site in northern Ontario, but their operations also span to multiple sites in Mexico, if you prefer sun over snowshoes.

As you may suspect, mining companies often hire young professionals with backgrounds in engineering and geology, but those are not the only opportunities to make a career in the industry.

Up for an adventure?

"Canadian mining company Teck Resources has mine sites from the Red Dog zinc-lead mine in northwestern Alaska, to the Quebrada Blanca mine in northern Chile."
Ashleigh Trahan

Long before mines are producing tons of precious metals per day, there are thousands of workers required to create the budgets, do the legal legwork and bring the mine into production.

Often, mining companies will hire surveyors, engineers and geologists for a few years to support the design and build of a mine, and then they'll move on to a different project.

These lucky folks get to travel around the world and spend a few years in Australia before moving onto their next project in Panama. When the mine is actually operational, all sorts of support staff to keep the mine operations running smoothly — health and safety experts, information technology professionals, and skilled trades, to name a few.

So, even if you're looking to launch a career in human resources, for example, there are opportunities for you in the mining industry.

Working in remote locations and new countries may present challenges that working in a cubicle may not (like being a few hundred kilometres from the nearest Starbucks), it also provides the opportunity to be exposed to new cultures while gaining experience in an exciting and innovative industry.

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When I finished high school last summer, I was planning to go to post-secondary school the next winter and I thought everything would be fine.

My plan for the summer was to spend as much time with my friends as possible, because they were going off to university in the fall and I also was searching for a job. When September came around and all my friends headed off to university, it was lonely, but I needed to continue with my job search.

Due to my indecisiveness, I chose not to pursue the program I registered for and opted for taking a year off to work. So I started up my job search again. I sat down at the computer and just Googled all the stores and companies I could think of and just sent them my resumé.

I got two interviews, one I thought went pretty well and the other, not so much.

I've gotten emails back saying they'll look at my profile/resumé and they'll be in touch, but no one got in touch.

After a while, I felt like no one had seen my resumé or even cared to look because I didn't have much experience.

Well, how can I gain experience if no one would give me a chance? But I kept looking and I'm still looking. I'm not sure if it's my resumé or my interview skills (even though I've only been in two my whole life) but, who knows. Practice makes perfect.

What I'm doing now

Right now I'm still currently looking for a job and I'm considering doing some internship work. Maybe that could add to my experience.

My recommendations for employers, career centres and schools

I haven't had enough experience to give a recommendation, but from the last interview I had I would say to the employers: make the interviewee as comfortable as possible. How are you going to get to know someone and see if they are up for the job if you can see them fumbling over their words, constantly moving around and downright being a nervous wreck? Making someone else feel comfortable as well will make the whole interview process a lot easier, I believe.

My advice for other students and recent graduates

My advice would be don't leave it to the last minute. Do your research, have someone look over your resumé and just go for it. If you truly want something, take risks and see what happens. Don't be lazy or procrastinate or you'll end up in the same position as I am.

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Success is mine, all mine

You just struck gold. Now is the optimal time to explore career opportunities in the mining industry

CHRISTINA PELLEGRINI
TalentEgg.ca

Women now make up 18.6 per cent of the Canadian mining workforce, according to a 2011 Carleton University report. ISTOCK

A shortage of talent threatens to delay, downsize and even cancel mining projects around the world.

In Canada, where 40 per cent of the mining workforce is set to retire within the next 10 years, finding and hiring a skilled worker is like striking gold. That's good news for ambitious entry-level workers hoping to climb up the corporate ladder, says Andrew Pollard, president of Vancouver-based executive search firm The Mining Recruitment Group.

This includes people in scientific roles like geologists and engineers, those responsible for operational functions like equipment operators and tradespeople, and traditional support staff like analysts and lawyers.

As a recent grad, you can set yourself apart from your coworkers and become a leader in your organization by doing these two things during your first five years:

Be really good at what you were hired to do

"If you were hired as a geologist, being a good geologist should be your main focus," Pollard says.

Before you think about promotions and career advancement, it's important to show your boss that you're committed to excelling in your current role.

Diversify your skills

Once you get a handle on your primary function, Pollard recommends that you become familiar with other aspects of the mining business.

"Look for opportunities beyond your job title in investor relations or as a company spokesperson at conferences and tradeshows," he says.

One of the ways mining workers can diversify their skills is by enrolling in the Canadian Securities Course. On the other hand, workers who lack technical skills could consider enrolling in a mining-related training program.

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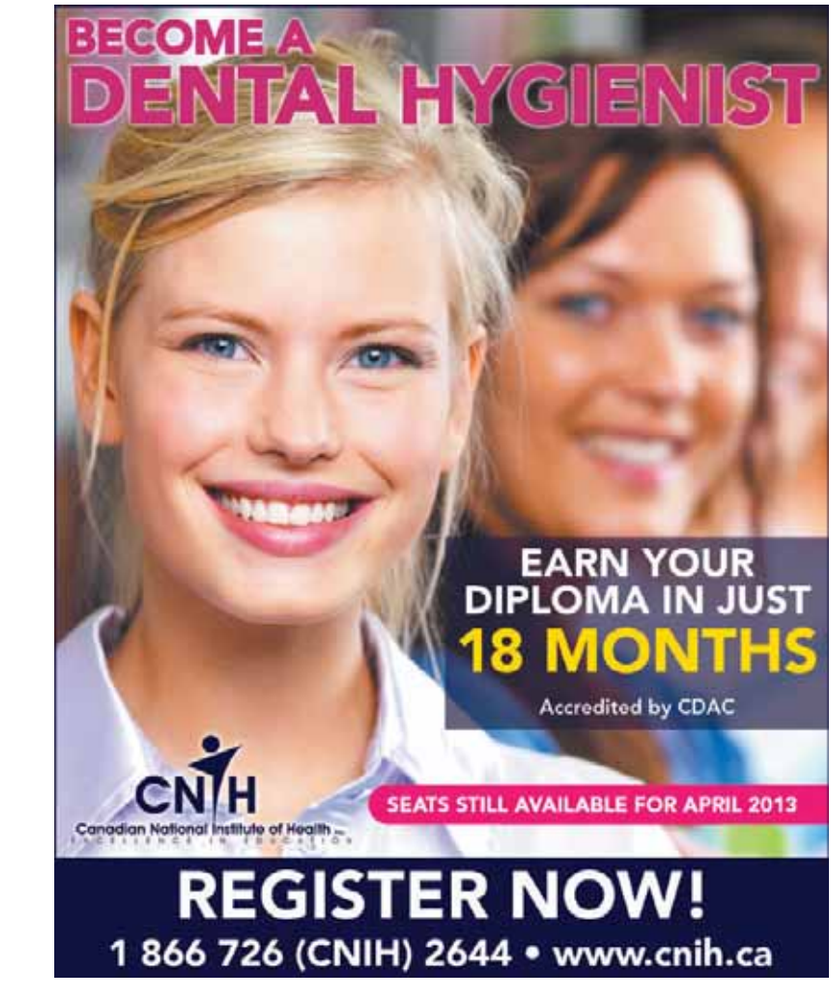
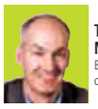


Stairway to hockey heaven

Curtis Glencross started out as an unscouted junior, but has made a name for himself in recent years as one of the Calgary Flames' top power forwards. MIKE RIDEWOOD/GETTY IMAGES



THE HOCKEY NEWS
Brian Costello
calgary@metronews.ca

Since the season he started scoring goals with regularity a couple of years ago, I began regarding Calgary Flame Curtis Glencross as a poor man's Scott Hartnell.

Both are beefy Saskatchewan boys born in 1982, have solid work ethics and deceptive speed, are strong along the boards and play with a physical edge. Heck, if Glencross would steer clear of the barbershop for a while, he might even end up with the frizzy fro that makes Hartnell so recognizable with the Philadelphia Flyers.

But they couldn't have been more different a decade or so ago. Hartnell was the budding power forward out of Prince Albert who was drafted sixth overall by Nashville and made the NHL as an 18-year-old. Glencross was an unscouted junior A player in Brooks who went on to play two college seasons in Alaska.

Hartnell was in his sixth NHL season (plus a lockout year in Norway) by the time Glencross got a sniff of the big leagues with Anaheim in 2006-07. It took Hartnell more than a few seasons to work his way up the depth chart to the point where he's a top-six forward with 30-goal potential. Similarly, Glencross started out as a depth forward who could kill penalties and wear down the opposition.

Then when the likes of Niklas Hagman, Rene Bourque and Matt Stajan proved they couldn't play on the top-two lines, Glencross got his opportunity and ran with it. He scored 24 goals two seasons ago and was clipping along at a 32-goal pace last year before injuries limited his totals to 26 goals in 67 games.

The best part about Glencross? He plays better when he's antagonized. Prone to the occasional silly penalties, he's most effective when he plays with an edge in the corners and around the net. He's less effective when he stops working and figures the goals will come the way they did for Brett Hull — by standing in the right spot and delivering.

And even though Calgary signed Jiri Hudler and Roman Cervenka to boost the attack on the top-two lines, the evolution of Glencross as a quality power forward has made him worthy to play some heavy minutes. He's come a long way in the past decade.

Alberta skip to defend her Scotties title

There will be rising stars, familiar faces and veteran curlers in the field at next month's Scotties Tournament of Hearts.

Several top rinks recently qualified for the 12-team competition at Kingston, Ont.'s K-Rock Centre. Alberta's Heather Nedohin is back to defend her title and she'll be challenged by Manitoba's Jennifer Jones, B.C.'s Kelly Scott, Mary-Anne Arsenault of Nova Scotia and Suzanne Birt of Prince Edward Island.

Ontario's Rachel Homan has enjoyed a successful season and will get a boost from the home crowd at the Feb. 16-24 event. The Ottawa skip, who won the national junior title in 2010, will be making her second Scotties appearance.

Added pressure

"I know what it's like to play against Team Canada — everybody raises their game.... But that also raises our game."

Alberta's Heather Nedohin on the additional pressure that comes with wearing the Maple Leaf jersey as the Team Canada entry.

The Northwest Territories/Yukon entry will be led by Kerry Galusha, who will be competing in her 11th Canadian championship. Kristie Moore will skip the Alberta rink and Allison Ross will guide the Quebec side.

Saskatchewan's Jill Shumay and Newfoundland and Labrador's Stacie Devereaux are also in the field. New Brunswick's entry will be confirmed Sunday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Alberta skip Heather Nedohin calls a shot during a gold-medal draw at the 2012 Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Red Deer. Nedohin will get the chance to defend her title from Feb. 16-24. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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San Francisco 49ers defensive tackle Will Tukuafu flexes his muscles with reporter Karim Mendiburu during media day for Super Bowl XLVII Tuesday in New Orleans. The San Francisco 49ers will take on the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. DAVID J. PHILLIP/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Veteran receivers will have second shot at title ring

Super Bowl media day. Niners' Moss and Ravens' Boldin both trying to put tough championship losses behind them

Randy Moss used to be a star. Now, he's just an afterthought with the San Francisco 49ers.

It's a role he's still struggling to accept.

Moss spent much of his career as one of the NFL's top receivers. During Super Bowl media day on Tuesday, he called himself "the greatest receiver ever to do it." That's a claim sure to be debated in NFL circles.

One thing is certain: The 35-year-old Moss is no longer an elite receiver. This season with the 49ers he caught just 28 passes for 434 yards and three touchdowns.

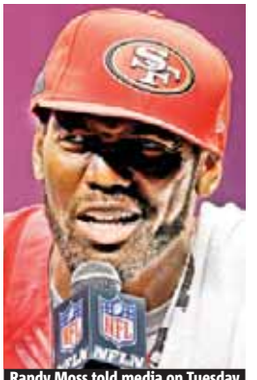
While Moss says he "doesn't understand" being a blocker and a decoy, he's willing to accept his new status if that's what it takes to win his first Super Bowl.

On the other side of the field will be Anquan Boldin, who wants to be known as more than simply a tough receiver.

The 32-year-old, a key player in Baltimore's charge to the Super Bowl, isn't afraid to cut across the field. He can shrug off a hard hit, and also is an aggressive downfield blocker.

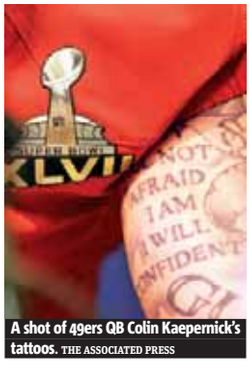
Asked Tuesday if he appreciates his reputation as one of the toughest receivers in the league, Boldin replied, "I look at it as, I'm a football player. Not so much a receiver."

Oh, but the man can catch the ball. He's scored three touchdowns in three playoff games, and now he's hoping for a Super Bowl ring after coming up short in 2008 with Arizona.

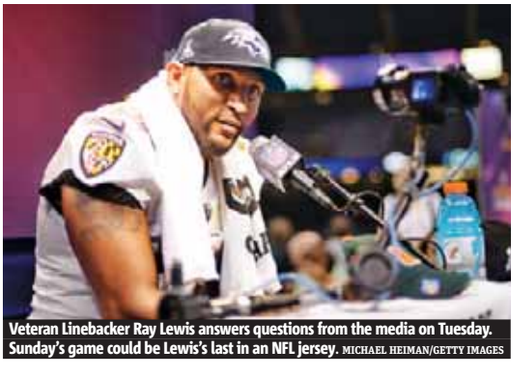


Randy Moss told media on Tuesday that he is the "greatest receiver ever" to play in the NFL. DAVID J. PHILLIP/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moss also came up short just a year earlier after the 2007 season, when the New England Patriots lost to the New York Giants after an undefeated season. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



A shot of 49ers QB Colin Kaepernick's tattoos. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Veteran Linebacker Ray Lewis answers questions from the media on Tuesday. Sunday's game could be Lewis's last in an NFL jersey. MICHAEL HEIMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Desjardins to be Ottawa's new GM: CFL source

Marcel Desjardins is getting a second shot at being a CFL general manager.

A CFL source requesting anonymity said Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group will name Desjardins the new GM of the city's CFL expansion franchise.

The announcement will be made on Wednesday at a news conference.

Desjardins, a native of Burlington, Ont., has spent the past four seasons as the Montreal Alouettes assistant general manager. He was the GM of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in 2007 before returning to Montreal.

Overall, Desjardins has spent nine seasons as the assistant to Alouettes general manager Jim Popp.

The hiring of Desjardins in Ottawa is hardly a surprise, as he's been mentioned as a leading candidate for the GM post for roughly the past eight months.

It's the second significant blow this off-season to the Alouettes football operations department. Earlier this month, head coach Marc Trestman left Montreal to become head coach of the NFL's Chicago Bears.

Desjardins also spent time working in the CFL's head office in Toronto from 1994 to 1999.

The Ottawa franchise is slated to begin play in 2014, and Desjardins will have plenty of work ahead of him.

Ottawa will select four NCAA underclassmen in this year's CFL draft before participating in December in a three-round expansion draft of players made available from the existing eight clubs. Then, in 2014, the club will take part in the league's Canadian college draft

Ottawa has been without a CFL franchise since 2006, when the Renegades were suspended by the league after four seasons because of financial instability. The Renegades were born seven years after the storied Ottawa Rough Riders folded operations.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A CFL source requesting anonymity said Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group will name Marcel Desjardins the new GM of the city's CFL expansion franchise. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A history of pigskin

The Ottawa football club began playing in 1876 and did so until 1996, winning nine Grey Cup titles during its tenure before folding.

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
New Jersey	5	3	0	2	12	9	8
NY Islanders	6	3	2	1	22	19	7
NY Rangers	6	3	3	0	16	17	6
Pittsburgh	6	3	3	0	16	18	6
Philadelphia	7	2	5	0	14	20	4

NORTHEAST DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Boston	6	5	0	1	19	12	11
Ottawa	6	4	1	1	19	12	9
Montreal	5	4	1	0	17	10	8
Toronto	6	3	3	0	18	20	6
Buffalo	6	2	3	1	16	19	5

SOUTHEAST DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Tampa Bay	6	5	1	0	29	15	10
Winnipeg	6	3	2	1	18	18	7
Carolina	5	2	3	0	14	18	4
Washington	6	1	4	1	13	22	3
Florida	6	1	5	0	10	24	2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

CENTRAL DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Chicago	6	6	0	0	22	13	12
St. Louis	6	5	1	0	24	13	10
Detroit	6	3	2	1	15	17	7
Nashville	6	1	2	3	10	18	5
Columbus	7	2	4	1	13	22	5

NORTHWEST DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
Minnesota	6	3	2	1	16	17	7
Edmonton	5	3	2	0	15	14	6
Vancouver	6	2	2	2	16	19	6
Colorado	5	2	3	0	10	13	4
Calgary	4	1	2	1	11	15	3

PACIFIC DIVISION

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
San Jose	5	5	0	0	23	8	10
Anaheim	4	3	1	0	15	14	6
Los Angeles	5	2	2	1	11	14	5
Dallas	7	2	4	1	13	18	5
Phoenix	6	2	4	0	21	20	4

Note: A team winning in overtime or shootout is credited with two points and a victory in the W column; the team losing in overtime or shootout receives one point which is registered in the OL (other loss) column.

Tuesday's results
Boston 2 New Jersey 1 (SO)
NY Rangers 2 Philadelphia 1
Toronto 4 Buffalo 3 (OT)
Montreal 4 Winnipeg 3
Ottawa 3 Washington 2
Detroit 4 Dallas 1
NY Islanders 4 Pittsburgh 1
Tampa Bay 5 Florida 2
Minnesota 3 Columbus 2
Anaheim at San Jose
Monday's results
Boston 5 Carolina 3
Columbus 2 Dallas 1
Phoenix 4 Nashville 0
Edmonton 4 Colorado 1
Los Angeles 3 Vancouver 2 (SO)
Wednesday's games — All Times Eastern
Montreal at Ottawa, 7 p.m.
Chicago at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Edmonton at Phoenix, 9:30 p.m.
Colorado at Vancouver, 10 p.m.
Thursday's games
Washington at Toronto, 7 p.m.
Pittsburgh at NY Rangers, 7 p.m.
NY Islanders at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at Boston, 7 p.m.
St. Louis at Columbus, 7 p.m.
Winnipeg at Florida, 7:30 p.m.
Colorado at Calgary, 9 p.m.
Nashville at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.
Edmonton at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

NHL SCORING LEADERS

	G	A	Pt
Marleau, SJ	9	4	13
Thornton, SJ	3	10	13
St. Louis, TBL	3	8	11
Stamkos, TBL	3	7	10
Pavelski, SJ	2	8	10
Parise, Min	5	4	9
Vanek, Buf	3	6	9
Kane, Chi	2	7	9
Gaborik, NYR	5	3	8
Hossa, Chi	5	3	8
Tarasenko, STL	4	4	8
Pominville, Buf	3	5	8
Couture, SJ	3	5	8
Shattenkirk, STL	0	8	8
Conacher, TBL	2	5	7
Hall, Edm	1	6	7
Purcell, TBL	1	6	7
Tavares, NYI	1	6	7
Pietrangelo, STL	1	6	7
Winnik, Ana	5	1	6
Heatley, Min	4	2	6
Staal, Car	4	2	6
Kane, Win	3	3	6
Toews, Chi	3	3	6
Byfuglien, Win	3	3	6

Not including last night's games

NFL

SUPER BOWL XLVII

Sunday, Feb. 3 At New Orleans, La.
Baltimore vs. San Francisco, 6 p.m.

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	28	13	.683	—
New York	27	15	.643	1½
Chicago	27	17	.614	2½
Brooklyn	27	18	.600	3
Indiana	26	19	.578	4
Atlanta	25	19	.568	4½
Milwaukee	24	19	.558	5
Boston	21	23	.477	8½
Philadelphia	18	26	.409	11½
Detroit	17	28	.378	13
Toronto	**16**	**29**	**.356**	**14**
Orlando	14	30	.318	15½
Cleveland	13	33	.283	17½
Washington	11	32	.256	18
Charlotte	11	33	.250	18½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	36	11	.766	—
Oklahoma City	34	11	.756	1
L.A. Clippers	33	13	.717	2½
Memphis	29	15	.659	5½
Golden State	28	17	.622	7
Denver	28	18	.609	7½
Utah	24	21	.533	11
Houston	25	22	.532	11
Portland	22	22	.500	12½
L.A. Lakers	19	25	.432	15½
Dallas	19	25	.432	15½
Minnesota	17	24	.415	16
Sacramento	17	29	.370	18½
New Orleans	15	29	.341	19½
Phoenix	15	30	.333	20

Note: division leaders ranked in top three positions regardless of winning percentage.

Tuesday's results
Golden State 108 Cleveland 95
Milwaukee 117 Detroit 90
Dallas at Portland
New Orleans at L.A. Lakers
Monday's results
Memphis 103 Philadelphia 100
Golden State 114 **Toronto 102**
Sacramento 96 Washington 94
Brooklyn 97 Orlando 77
Chicago 93 Charlotte 85
Denver 102 Indiana 101
Houston 125 Utah 80
Wednesday's games — All Times Eastern
Washington at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Detroit at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Sacramento at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
Orlando at New York, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
Miami at Brooklyn, 8 p.m.
L.A. Clippers at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Chicago at Milwaukee, 8 p.m.
Charlotte at San Antonio, 8:30 p.m.
Houston at Denver, 9 p.m.
New Orleans at Utah, 9 p.m.
L.A. Lakers at Phoenix, 10:30 p.m.

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2013 Buick Verano Turbo

ALL PHOTOS WHEELBASE

Fuel economy

Fuel economy with the manual gearbox is 10.2 l/100 km in the city and 6.3 on the highway (10.1/6.6 for the automatic), numbers that differ only slightly from the base Verano's 9.9/6.2 rating. To handle the power, the Turbo receives a unique steering calibration and a suspension that's 20 per cent firmer.

The engine is a two litre with 250 hp.

2013 Buick Verano Turbo

- **Type.** Four-door entry-luxury compact sedan
- **Engine (hp).** 2.0-litre DOHC I4 (250)
- **Transmission.** Six-speed automatic; six-speed manual
- **Base price (incl.destination).** $32,400

Engine

Enter the Verano Turbo that puts out 250 horsepower from its 2.0-litre four-cylinder. More importantly, the engine makes 260 pound-feet of torque, with 90 per cent of it available from between 1,750 and 5,500 revs per minute. That's only 20 horses and 10 pound-feet shy of the larger (and heavier) Buick Regal GS.

Power

Buick claims the Turbo will accelerate to 60 m.p.h. (96 km/h) from rest in slightly more than six seconds, which is right in line with comparable premium brands from Audi and BMW that Buick holds up as performance benchmarks. It's also half a second quicker than the 270-horsepower Regal GS.

Review. Dressed for the ball but wearing sneakers ... fast sneakers

MALCOLM GUNN
Wheelbase Media

Buick's grand plan is in full swing and it appears to be actually working.

Just what is the plan, you ask? Well, it involves downsizing the line and injecting it with more style and less mass. And baptizing all models in a fountain of youth.

They also run on smaller, fuel-frugal power plants that offer as much as or greater performance than previous models. The plan includes enhancing the luxury-car experience to match or exceed the premium import brands.

The Lacrosse and Regal already fall into this strategy, as does the Verano, which was new for 2012. However for the 2013 model year the smallest Buick sedan is literally stepping up the pace with an optional — and significantly more powerful — turbo-charged model.

The sense here is that Buick needed to add some premium power for the Verano to be considered in the same sport-sedan league as BMW, Audi and Mercedes-Benz, and not be viewed as an afterthought brand. With its more mature customer base shrinking over the years, reinvention and rejuvenation has become a matter of survival. Outwardly, the Turbo varies only slightly from the regular-strength Verano with dual exhaust outlets, subtle rear spoiler and trunk lid badge. Elegant is better here, for sure.

The fact that the only significant Turbo options are a navigation system and a power sunroof underscores how well the car lines up with other luxury-leaning compacts vying for your dollars.

The overall attractiveness of the Verano, coupled with the rapid-fire authority of its high-output turbo, makes it worthy of its Euro-based peers and for less money in most cases.

You have to love it when a plan comes together.

The interior is futuristic yet elegant.

Here's where you'll feel that extra power.

By comparison

1 Audi A4
Base price: $39,700

2 Hyundai Sonata Turbo
Base price: $33,400

3 Volvo S60
Base price: $39,150

5 DRIVE

YOUTHFUL SPIRIT

FR-S: Two-door compact — $27,500

SCION FR-S LOADED WITH NICHE PERSONALITY, SHARP LOOKS AND PERFORMANCE

What's difficult to figure out is whether Scion is a Toyota division of like cars, or unlike cars. Obviously, when you look at the tiny-tot iQ, the boxy xB, the sporty tC and the new rear-wheel-drive FR-S, there's no real theme here — like, none — which leads you to think that if it's just too bizarre to be seated at the adult Toyota table, it ends up at the Scion kid table.

And that's actually terrific because each of those cars is loaded with niche personality and youthful spirit. The identical twins resulting from a union between Toyota and Subaru are set to make a move on the sport-coupe franchise.

For Subaru, the BRZ becomes the exception to its all-wheel-drive lineup rule. For Toyota's Scion branch, the FR-S represents the flagship model that the brand has needed since its 2004 inception. Ultimately, Scion, with its more prolific dealer network, should move its fair share of FR-S (the caps stand for Front-engine, Rear-wheel-drive Sport) metal. And what impressive metal it is.

The coupe's long-hood, short-deck proportions are right on the money. The tachometer (also big and round) sits dead centre in the driver's line of vision, with a smaller speedometer to the left and fuel/temperature gauges to the right. Shift-indicator lights on the tach can be set at 100-rpm increments starting from 2,000 rpm up to the engine's 7,400-rpm redline. The driver can also engage a warning chime that goes off when the engine's max rev limit is about to be reached.

As with Subaru's BRZ, the FR-S employs a 200-horsepower 2.0-litre "flat" four-cylinder engine (one bank of two pistons fires at 180 degrees to the opposite two pistons). A six-speed manual transmission is standard with a six-speed automatic available as an option. The latter features steering-wheel-mounted paddle-shift controls, rev-matching downshifts plus a "sport" mode that delivers faster shifts and throttle response.

The powertrain sits well back of the front wheels to optimize distribution of the car's svelte 1,250-kilogram front:rear heft at 53:47. Fuel economy is rated at 8.3 l/100 km city and 5.8 highway for the automatic (9.6/6.6 for manual-gearbox versions). However, those numbers are offset by the engine's requirement for more expensive premium fuel.

Every FR-S is shipped from its Japan homeland with the expected load of standard gear plus aluminum sport pedals, a 300-watt Pioneer sound system and Michelin Primacy rubber fitted to a neat set of 17-inch wheels. The host of available dealer add-ons includes a premium audio package, fog lights, rear spoiler, sport exhaust system, 18-inch wheels, performance brake pads and a cold air intake for a richer air/fuel mixture and a bit more power and sound. *– Wheelbase Media*

BASE PRICES (INCLUDING DESTINATION)

FR-S: TWO-DOOR COMPACT — $27,500
IQ: TWO-DOOR SUBCOMPACT — $18,400
TC: SUBCOMPACT COUPE — $22,550
XD: SUBCOMPACT HATCHBACK — $18,800
XB: SUBCOMPACT WAGON — $19,900

tC: Subcompact coupe — $22,550

iQ: Two-door subcompact — $18,400

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CX-5: Five-passenger tall wagon — $24,900

ACTIV AND SPORTY

MAZDA SKYACTIV REPRESENTS TRANSFORMATION OF THE POWERTRAIN

CX-9: Seven-passenger tall wagon — $38,300

Mazda2: Four-door hatch — $15,600

Mazda6: Sedan/hatchback — $25,850

MX-5 Miata: Roadster — $30,950

It's likely that at some point Mazda will have to dive in and build a hybrid model, but the company is so convinced that the internal-combustion engine can be improved to meet performance and fuel economy goals that you won't hear a peep about hybrids. Possibly not for another decade, even.

The direct-fuel-injection "SkyActiv" program was first brought to the Mazda3 sedan and now finds a home with the new CX-5. Replacing the long-standing Ford Escape-based Tribute wagon, the attractively designed five-passenger CX-5 also fills in for the gone-for-2013 CX-7.

More than simply a marketing slogan, SkyActiv represents a holistic transformation of the powertrain plus various other components that help save fuel in addition to making Mazdas better driving machines.

From a chassis and suspension perspective, the automaker's engineers have attempted to infuse the vehicle with as much MX-5 Miata-type sporty behaviour as possible, combined with a highly efficient engine and transmission.

The powerplant consists of a high-compression 2.0-litre, four-cylinder that, due to its unique design, is able to run on low-grade 87-octane fuel and is lighter by 10 per cent than Mazda's non-Skyactiv 2.0.

Output is rated at 155 horsepower and 150 pound-feet of torque, down from the Tribute's 171/171 levels. However, the smaller displacement CX-5 is slightly less paunchy so it all evens out. Both sets of numbers are significantly improved over the Tribute and CX-7 and beat league leaders Honda CR-V and Hyundai Tucson.

Mazda hasn't scrimped, loading up even the most basic CX-5 Sport model. For $24,900, including destination charges, the base GX gets the usual air conditioning and power-operated items, along with cruise control and push-button start. Head up the line and you will find the GS and GT model, the latter of which comes with dual-zone climate control and leather seats.

Mazda3: Compact sedan — $17,500

BASE PRICES INCLUDING DESTINATION

CX-5: FIVE-PASSENGER TALL WAGON — $24,900
CX-9: SEVEN-PASSENGER TALL WAGON — $38,300
MAZDA2: FOUR-DOOR HATCH — $15,600
MAZDA3: COMPACT SEDAN — $17,500; $31,700 (MAZDASPEED3 HATCHBACK)
MAZDA5: MINI MINIVAN — $23,850
MAZDA6: MID-SIZED SEDAN/HATCHBACK — $25,850
MX-5 MIATA: ROADSTER — $30,950

The only other wagon left in the Mazda fleet for 2013 is the excellent CX-9 that seats up to seven people. It comes in for a little bit of plastic surgery that adds a lot of depth, dimension and character to the look. Left unchanged, however, is a 273-horsepower, 3.7-litre V6 that was designed by Ford (the Blue Oval automaker maintains ties with Mazda) and shows up in a number of applications, including the Mustang, Ford F-150 and Lincoln MKZ.

– Wheelbase Media

mazda

zoom-zoom

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Shelby GT500: Two-door coupe/convertible — $63,250

MAX ENERGI

C-Max: Four-door compact tall wagon — $27,850

C-MAX AND PLUG-IN ENERGI REPRESENT FORD HYBRID BRAND

Ford gets our vote as the busiest automaker of 2013 and one of the most electrifying as two of its three brand new offerings have large batteries that aid fuel performance.

In fact, the new C-Max and its plug-in Energi counterpart represent Ford's first dedicated hybrid brand. They are based on the compact Focus architecture but the C-Max is more than 10 centimetres wider and 15 centimetres taller. Cargo space is about equal to that of the Toyota Prius v wagon, but with the rear seat folded flat the C-Max has nearly one-third more space than its chief rival.

The C-Max and C-Max Energi hybrid's powertrains consist of a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder that produce 141 horsepower that works in tandem with a 106-horsepower (estimated) electric motor. The net system output is rated at 188 horsepower, which is 54 more than the Prius v. A continuously variable transmission (CVT) sends the torque to the front wheels.

Ford claims the Energi can run up to 135 km/h on battery power alone and more than triple the Prius Plug-in's maximum electric-only range (32 versus 10 kilometres). This is all well and good as the hybrid piece of the sales pie is pretty thin, which is why two of the brand's volume heavy hitters are also brand new this year.

It's a tossup as to whether the Escape or the Fusion will be more popular, but that must be a tough (not) problem to have. The new Escape represents a clean-sheet design-and-content approach to satisfy the needs of multi-continent buyers. The sleeker look is radically different from the outgoing version's boxiness, however, its slightly larger dimensions have resulted in greater rear-seat room plus slightly more passenger and cargo volume with the rear seat in place or folded flat.

The base front-wheel-drive S model runs with a 168-horsepower, 2.5-litre four-cylinder, while the front- and all-wheel-drive SE designation uses a 178-horsepower, 1.6-litre turbocharged "EcoBoost" four-cylinder. A 237-horsepower turbo, four-cylinder (also from Ford's "EcoBoost" engine lineup) is standard on the SEL and Titanium trims.

The Escape is the first Ford to offer both Torque Vectoring Control and Curve Control to help distribute the correct amount of power to each wheel when cornering so that the vehicle maintains its intended path. Escape's most unique option is the power liftgate that automatically opens and closes when you shake your foot hokey-pokey-style beneath the bumper (great when your hands are full of kids and/or groceries).

The new Fusion's big trick is pretty obvious. Just look at it. The sedan's primary eye-catcher is the dramatic roofline and open-mouth grille that greatly differs from the previous triple-bar fixture. The distance between the front and rear wheels increases by 13 centimetres and the width and height by about 2.5 centimetres.

At the complete opposite end of the spectrum, the Mustang GT gets a slight bump in power to 420 horses while the new 662-horsepower Shelby GT 500 can apparently top 200 mph (320 km/h). No hybrid here, just a supercharged 5.8-litre V8. Get it while you can, because who knows what the new Mustang for 2014 will be all about.

For those on a much-less-than-$63,250 budget, there's the new Focus ST performance model that adds a list of improvements aimed at buyers who might otherwise consider a Volkswagen GTI. The 2.0-litre "EcoBoost" turbocharged four-cylinder produces 252 horsepower and even features overboost with a giant slug of mid-range torque added.

– Wheelbase Media

Fiesta: Compact sedan/hatchback — $15,550

Taurus: Full-size sedan — $28,750

Edge: Four-door tall wagon — $29,550

Focus: Compact sedan/hatchback — $16,550

Fusion: Mid-size sedan — $24,050; $31,550 hybrid

BASE PRICES INCLUDING DESTINATION

C-MAX: FOUR-DOOR COMPACT TALL WAGON — $27,850
EDGE: FOUR-DOOR TALL WAGON — $29,550
ESCAPE: FOUR-DOOR COMPACT TALL WAGON — $23,050
FIESTA: COMPACT SEDAN/HATCHBACK — $15,550
FLEX: FULL-SIZED TALL WAGON — $31,050
FOCUS: COMPACT SEDAN/HATCHBACK — $16,550
FUSION: MID-SIZE SEDAN — $24,050; $31,550 HYBRID
MUSTANG: TWO-DOOR COUPE — $25,550
SHELBY GT500: TWO-DOOR COUPE/CONVERTIBLE — $63,250
TAURUS: FULL-SIZE SEDAN — $28,750

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Yukon Denali: Full-size SUV — $75,000 (2012)

BLENDING LUXURY, UTILITY

The GMC brand is a bit at odds with itself in that it blends a measure of luxury and prestige (softness) along with ruggedness. How/why it's perceived as being more of workhorse than Chevrolet, yet more Friday-night urban is a bit of a mystery.

Take the Terrain, which is GMC's entry-level small sport-utility vehicle. The GMC badge automatically gave it credibility as a more rugged piece than the equivalent Chevrolet Equinox, while also providing a more upscale experience. Proof? The ultra-luxurious Denali sub-brand is now available on its smallest vehicle. More chrome on the broad grille and exhaust pipes, satin touches, unique lights, and body-coloured fascias and rocker mouldings highlight the exterior, while softer leather on the seats, doors, and steering wheel, along with "smoked" mahogany inserts differentiate the cabin from lesser trims.

However, unlike other Denali models, the Terrain version can be had with either the standard 182-horsepower, 2.4-litre four-cylinder or the new 301-horsepower, 3.6-litre V6. Despite the latter's big bump in power and torque, it has the identical 12.4/8.1 l/100 km rating as the older 3.0-litre unit. All Terrains get six-speed automatic transmissions and both engines can be had with front- or optional all-wheel-drive. Towing capacity for the four-cylinder is 680 kilograms, while the V6 is rated for 1,500.

Sierra HD trucks wearing the Denali badge as well as the rest of the Sierra HD lineup in regular-, extended- and crew cab styles can be had with a 360-horsepower, 6.0-litre V8 or the 6.6-litre turbo-diesel (preferred by the vast majority of Sierra HD purchasers) that kicks out 397 horsepower and 765 pound-feet torque. Both engines are mated to six-speed automatic transmissions.

To keep the popular eight-passenger Acadia from falling behind the German and Japanese competition, and in response to new homegrown rivals such as the Ford Explorer and Dodge Durango, GMC has given its big wagon a dose of attitude. The squared-off front end takes inspiration from the smaller Terrain and uses neat LED accent lighting in the new headlight clusters. New LED taillights, wraparound glass and a spoiler freshen up the rear end.

The interior gets nicer plastics and leathers, highlighted by a new colour touch-screen with optional navigation. All Acadias come with either seven or eight seats and lots of room behind the third row for cargo. – *Wheelbase Media*

Acadia: Mid-size SUV — $40,100

BASE PRICES (INCL. DESTINATION)

ACADIA: MID-SIZE SUV; $40,100
SIERRA: FULL-SIZE PICKUP; $28,250
SIERRA HD: FULL-SIZE PICKUP; $37,600
TERRAIN: COMPACT SUV; $29,900
YUKON: FULL-SIZE SUV; $51,200
YUKON DENALI: FULL-SIZE SUV; $75,000 (2012)

Acadia: Mid-size SUV — $40,100

Yukon: Full-size SUV — $51,200

Yukon: Full-size SUV — $51,200

Sierra: Full-size pickup — $28,250

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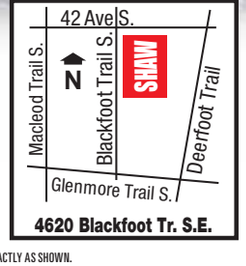

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FUNKY STYLE

NISSAN ALTIMA ALSO LEADS WAY IN FUEL ECONOMY

Altima: Mid-sized sedan — $25,500

The new Nissan Altima has some funky style going on and comes out on top as the fuel-economy champ of the category.

Most of the basic length/width/height dimensions vary only slightly, including a bit wider front and rear track (the distance between the left and right wheels). The well-appointed interior features NASA-inspired "zero-gravity" front seats for greater comfort. Cabin noise has been reduced with more sound-absorbing materials around the instrument panel, floor and roof areas and upgrading the engine mounts.

The base 2.5-litre, four-cylinder now delivers 182 horsepower, up from the previous 175 mark. An all-new continuously variable transmission (CVT) offers fewer moving parts, significantly reduced friction and electronic control improvements.

Nissan now claims fuel performance of 7.4 l/100 km city and 5.0 highway, compared with 8.8/6.2 for the previous Altima. Those numbers also beat current four-cylinder versions of the Toyota Camry, Hyundai Sonata and Honda Accord.

The Altima's optional 270-horsepower, 3.5-litre V6 remains unchanged, but it also benefits from the same CVT upgrade and is now rated at 9.3 l/100 km city/6.4 highway. Altima also boasts Active Understeer Control, which applies light braking pressure to the inside wheel in a corner to counteract the car's natural tendency to continue in a straight line.

The base 2.5 includes all the standard bells and whistles plus a six-way power driver's seat and keyless start. S and SV models progressively add dual-zone climate control, heated front seats and Bluetooth hands-free connectivity with hands-free messaging. Move up to the SL and a leather interior, heated steering wheel and power moonroof are yours. The coupe remains available, but only with a 2.5-litre, four-cylinder.

Sentra: Compact sedan — $17,200

BASE PRICES (INCLUDING DESTINATION)

370Z: COUPE/CONVERTIBLE — $42,600 (COUPE)
ALTIMA: MID-SIZED SEDAN — $25,500
ARMADA: FULL-SIZE SUV — $57,600
CUBE: SUBCOMPACT VAN/WAGON — $19,400
FRONTIER: COMPACT PICKUP — $26,100
GT-R: TWO-DOOR COUPE — $106,000
JUKE: FOUR-DOOR COMPACT WAGON — $22,900
LEAF: ELECTRIC FOUR-DOOR HATCH — $40,400
MAXIMA: MID-SIZED SEDAN — $39,500
MURANO: MID-SIZED SUV — $36,100
PATHFINDER: FULL-SIZE TALL WAGON — $30,200
QUEST: MINIVAN — $35,500
ROGUE: COMPACT WAGON — $25,600
SENTRA: COMPACT SEDAN — $17,200
TITAN: FULL-SIZE PICKUP — $35,500
VERSA: COMPACT HATCHBACK/SEDAN — $13,600
XTERRA: MID-SIZED SUV — $35,600

But wait a second, the design of the new Sentra four-door so closely mimics the mid-size Altima that, from not too far away, you could easily confuse the two. Both cars share similarly styled grilles and muscular-looking fenders and the sweep of the roofline that ends at a short rear deck also appears familiar.

Compared with the outgoing Sentra, the new car is slightly wider, lower and longer and has about the same interior volume, but the optical illusion is that it appears larger than it actually is. The new 130-horsepower, four-cylinder engine replaces the 2.0-litre, 140-horse four-cylinder.

But with about 65 kilograms less weight to haul around due to a lightened body structure, you will likely never notice the loss in peak power.

What you will notice is more cash in your jeans from fewer trips to the gas station. Sentras are rated at 6.6 l/100 km city and 4.9 highway. That's about a 13 per cent improvement compared to the previous rating. *– Wheelbase Media*

370Z: Coupe/convertible — $42,600

GT-R: Two-door coupe — $106,000

Quest: Minivan — $35,500

Juke: Four-door compact wagon — $22,900

Leaf: Electric four-door hatch — $40,400

Maxima: Mid-sized sedan — $39,500

Versa: Compact hatchback/sedan — $13,600

Rogue: Compact wagon — $25,600

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ALL EYES ON THE ACCORD

HONDA SEDAN UNDERGOES METAMORPHOSIS IN STYLE

Civic: Compact coupe — $19,700

With all the focus on a brand-new Accord — one of Honda's cornerstone models — the company is clearly focused on the launch. We know this because there is actually very little going for 2013 with the rest of the lineup, save for some modest styling updates for the Crosstour hatchback.

Buyers expecting the ninth-generation Accord to be bigger and bolder will need to adjust their perspective concerning one of North America's most successful sedan and coupe lines. The U.S.-built (30 years and counting) Accord maintains a conservative presence, while undergoing a metamorphosis in style, features and running gear.

The sedan has shrunk nine centimetres in overall length and loses about two centimetres between the front and rear wheels, while gaining 1.5 centimetres in width. Concurrently, trunk space increases by five per cent, thanks to a more compact rear suspension. The Accord appears more svelte, with less front overhang.

The coupe has undergone a more subtle transformation and remains one of the most appealing models of its type on the road. Inside, the artistically sculpted dashboard is thankfully devoid of knob and switchgear clutter. Drivers will be particularly enamoured with the clear and crisp white-on-black centre gauges and the eight-inch multi-information display screen. All passengers are treated to more comfort, with front-seaters enjoying more supportive buckets. There's also an extra 2.5 centimetres of legroom for those in back.

The base 2.4-litre, four-cylinder (labelled "Earth Dreams") makes 185 horsepower (189 for the Sport model), up from 177. The optional 278-horsepower, 3.5-litre V6 gains a mere seven ponies. A six-speed gearbox on four-cylinder Accord sedans and up-level V6 coupes remains available. A continuously variable transmission (CVT) replaces the five-speed automatic option on all four-cylinder models, but a six-speed automatic remains the only choice for V6 sedans and base V6 coupes.

CR-Z: Two-door hatchback hybrid — $24,100

Accord: Mid-size coupe — $27,900

Insight: Four-door sedan — $23,500

Accord: Mid-size sedan — $25,600

Civic: Compact sedan — $16,500; $26,500 hybrid

In early 2013, Honda will introduce the Accord plug-in hybrid with a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder mated with a 124-kilowatt electric motor for a total of 196 net horsepower. The plug-in can travel up to 24 kilometres on electric-only propulsion, operates on grid juice at up to 60 mph (96 km/h) and has a maximum 800-kilometre range. The clincher is it takes just three hours using 120-volt house current to replenish the lithium-ion battery (about 10 minutes for a 50 per cent charge). The plug-in will be followed by a conventional hybrid, giving the Accord a one-two punch in this category.

Honda must have also been paying attention when we suggested its Crosstour hatch be made available with a four-cylinder engine in the interests of greater efficiency. The automaker quietly added a 192-horsepower, 2.4-litre four-cylinder engine and five-speed automatic transmission as the quasi-wagon's base powertrain.

For 2013, the roomy Crosstour remains a radically different kind of Honda, although the reshaped nose and rear end give it a slightly more aggressive look that should help it find greater acceptance.

– Wheelbase Media

Fit: Four-door wagon — $16,100

BASE PRICES (INCLUDING DESTINATION)

ACCORD: MID-SIZE SEDAN — $25,600
ACCORD: MID-SIZE COUPE — $27,900
CIVIC: COMPACT SEDAN — $16,500; $26,500 HYBRID
CIVIC: COMPACT COUPE — $19,700
CROSSTOUR: MID-SIZE FOUR-DOOR HATCHBACK — $35,000 (EST.)
CR-V: COMPACT SUV — $27,600
CR-Z: TWO-DOOR HATCHBACK HYBRID — $24,100
FIT: FOUR-DOOR WAGON — $16,100
INSIGHT: FOUR-DOOR SEDAN — $23,500
ODYSSEY: MINIVAN — $31,600
PILOT: MID-SIZE SUV — $36,600
RIDGELINE: FOUR-DOOR PICKUP — $36,600

Crosstour: Mid-size four-door hatchback — $35,000 (est.)

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SHIFTING TIDE

VOLKSWAGEN ADDS BETTER PRODUCT WITH GOOD VALUE

Passat: Mid-sized sedan — $25,400

CC: Mid-sized sedan — $36,500

Eos: Compact convertible — $41,300

Beetle: Compact hatchback — $23,600

Volkswagen has aspirations of big sales gains in North America and to do that means more product, better product and product that's perceived as good value. With the help of the new-for-2012 Passat, the tide seems to be shifting in Volkswagen's favour despite not a lot going on, and no new models for the 2013 model year.

The focus appears to be on the 2014 model year where a new, larger Golf is set to hit the streets. Will it have the same value quotient as the Passat, a car that grew in size and, conversely, slashed the base price by thousands of dollars?

The 2013 Passat starts at less than $25,400 — nearly $10,000 less than the previous version that bowed out in 2011 — while a growth spurt added the kind of room expected in this category. The Passat is nearly 10 centimetres longer overall and the distance between the front and rear wheels has been stretched by about the same amount. The size is in line with models belonging to the rest of the mid-size segment.

The Passat's interior styling, inspired by Volkswagen's new-look Touareg sport ute, is clean, uncluttered and devoid of the trendy dashboard swoops and swirls. To help cut the price, Passat dropped the previously standard 200-horsepower, 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbocharged powerplant for a less-expensive non-turbo 170-horsepower, 2.5-litre five-cylinder. A 280-horsepower, 3.6-litre V6 is optional, as is Volkswagen's hybrid-challenging 140-horsepower, 2.0-litre turbo-diesel that gives the Passat a rating of 4.4 l/100 km on the highway (6.8 in the city), along with a range approaching 1,300 kilometres.

Of course, VW is known for efficient diesels, but it's about to be known for hybrid power, too, as the Jetta adds just such a model to its lineup. Two years ago, pundits got all up in Volkswagen's grille about the perceived "dumbing down" of the sixth-generation Jetta. Those prognosticators are now dining on heaping helpings of crow, as the Jetta has become Vee-Dubs hot seller.

Dropping the price to make it competitive with other compact sedans helped, but a spacious interior and great handling was and still is a strong selling point.

The price-leader Jetta functions with a 115-horsepower, 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine that gets reasonable fuel economy. The 170-horsepower, 2.5-litre five-cylinder gas engine also returns as an option, but for serious fuel thriftiness opt for the 140-horsepower, 2.0-litre turbo-diesel (called the TDI) rated at 4.6 l/100 km on the highway. The performance-minded Jetta GLI returns with its 200-horsepower turbocharged 2.0-litre four-cylinder and track-tuned suspension, big wheels and sticky tires. The gasoline engines are mated to five-speed manual transmissions, or optional six-speed automatics, while the turbo-diesel offers a six-speed manual or optional six-speed automated manual DSG (short for Direct Shift Gearbox) transmission that eliminates the pesky torque converter, which means improved fuel economy and much quicker shifts that aid acceleration.

The new Jetta Hybrid uses a turbocharged 150-horsepower, 1.4-litre four-cylinder gas engine in combination with a 27-horsepower electric motor for 170 net horsepower. The Hybrid's torque flows through a seven-speed DSG and can run for up to two kilometres on electricity alone at speeds up to 70 km/h, reach 60 mph (96 km/h) from rest in less than nine seconds.

VW is on record as stating the company expects that hybrids will constitute three per cent of its total production by 2018, which means that the Passat, CC and upcoming 2014 Golf hatchback are likely candidates for this form of propulsion.

Meanwhile, the smaller Jetta SportWagen that's based on the older Golf platform basically carries over for 2013. But if Jetta has both diesel and hybrid models, just how long will it take for the automaker to combine the two? Having awesome highway fuel efficiency (diesel) and an electric helper motor for city driving ... it seems like a logical path to take.

– Wheelbase Media

Jetta: Compact sedan/wagon — $16,400 (sedan)

Golf: Compact hatchback — $21,900

Touareg: Mid-size SUV — $51,300

BASE PRICES (INCLUDING DESTINATION)

BEETLE: COMPACT HATCHBACK — $23,600
CC: MID-SIZED SEDAN — $36,500
EOS: COMPACT CONVERTIBLE — $41,300
GOLF: COMPACT HATCHBACK — $21,900; $30,800 (GTI)
JETTA: COMPACT SEDAN/WAGON — $16,400 (SEDAN)
PASSAT: MID-SIZED SEDAN — $25,400
TIGUAN: COMPACT SUV — $29,500
TOUAREG: MID-SIZE SUV — $51,300

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TOYOTA'S ELECTRIC CONNECTION

AVALON GETS YOUTHFUL LOOK AND HYBRID OPTION

Avalon: Full-sized sedan — $42,800

Toyota has been content to let the Prius brand take credit for the hybrid high sweeping the land. Why not when there are three separate models, including a new 2013 Prius c, but quietly in the background, other Toyotas are gaining hybrid options.

The new Avalon is a case in point. The big sedan enjoys a sterling reputation as a quiet, comfortable cruiser, but mostly with more mature drivers. That appears likely to change with the arrival of the new 2013 edition. The styling alone actually looks more youthful than the Camry from which it was spawned. Its crisp lines reflect the car's slightly more diminutive dimensions — six centimetres shorter, a bit narrower and not quite as tall — than the outgoing model. The new Avalon also weighs about 55 kilograms less as a result.

Unchanged is the 268-horsepower, 3.5-litre V6, although Toyota has tweaked the engine and installed an updated six-speed transaxle for improved fuel economy (11.2 city/7.6 highway versus 12.0/7.8). For 2013, Avalon joins the Camry in offering a gas-electric Hybrid model that uses a 156-horsepower, 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine working in tandem with an electric motor to produce 200 net horsepower.

As before, the transmission connects the V6 to the front wheels, while the continuously variable transmission is standard for the Hybrid. Toyota claims the fuel-miserly sedan will achieve the same 5.9 l/100 km city and 6.0 highway numbers as the Camry, which makes sense as the systems are identical and both sedans are very close in weight.

The improved interior features front seats that are more supportive with better side bolstering, while the concave-shaped dashboard results in more cabin room. By its very nature the base Avalon shows up with an abundance of standard equipment, although for the full-on luxury experience you will need to spring for a premium leather interior, heated and ventilated front and rear seats, larger wheels, navigation/communications systems and an up-level stereo, to list just a few options.

Prius c: Compact hatchback — $22,600

BASE PRICES (INCLUDING DESTINATION)

AVALON: FULL-SIZED SEDAN — $42,800
CAMRY: MID-SIZED SEDAN — $25,300; $28,600 (HYBRID)
COROLLA: COMPACT SEDAN — $17,050
MATRIX: COMPACT WAGON — $18,400
PRIUS: COMPACT SEDAN — $27,600
PRIUS PLUG-IN: COMPACT SEDAN — $37,300
PRIUS C: COMPACT HATCHBACK — $22,600
SIENNA: MINIVAN — $29,750
YARIS: COMPACT HATCHBACK/SEDAN — $15,800
VENZA: MID-SIZED WAGON — $30,300

At the exact opposite end of the Toyota spectrum, the Prius c becomes its smallest and least expensive member. Although diminutive in stature — almost 50 centimetres shorter than the standard Prius hatchback — the Prius c comes up big in minimizing fuel consumption, registering 3.5 l/100 km city and 4.0 highway. By comparison, the regular Prius's numbers are 3.7/4.0. The combined city/highway number for both is 3.7 l/100 km.

A major part of the Prius c's desirability is its attractive styling and practical hatchback shape. The front end does carry traces of Toyota's Yaris, but overall the "c" is easy on the eyes. And other than a steeply sloping roofline that might discourage tall types from accessing the rear portals, there's a generous (for its sub-compactness) amount of usable storage space, either with the split-folding back seat in the up or folded-flat position.

The Prius c's powertrain consists of a 73-horsepower, 1.5-litre four-cylinder engine coupled to a continuously variable transmission and assisted by a 60-horsepower (45-kilowatt) electric motor. The net output is a scant 99 horsepower, compared to 134 horses for the larger Prius hatch and wagon. The 144-volt battery pack and fuel tank are positioned beneath the rear seat to maximize interior space and lower the c's centre of gravity (for better weight distribution and road holding).

Additionally, the c's driver can switch between Normal, Eco and EV operation. The Eco mode takes some of the starch out of the standard throttle and climate control settings to save energy. The EV mode allows the car to run solely son electric power for not much more than about 1.5 kilometres and at less than 40 km/h, making it ideal for typical work commutes and other going-nowhere-fast situations.

– Wheelbase Media

Matrix: Compact wagon — $18,400

Corolla: Compact sedan — $17,050

Camry: Mid-sized sedan — $25,300

Yaris: Compact hatchback/sedan — $15,800

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Malibu: Mid-sized sedan — $26,500

Sonic: Sub-compact sedan/hatch — $16,000

Volt: Compact electric sedan — $43,000

Cruze: Four-door compact sedan — $17,200

SPARK IGNITES NEW OUTLOOK

CHEVROLET PUTS FOCUS BACK ON THE CAR LINE

Spark: City-car hatchback — $15,000

With the focus finally fully away from big wagons, which had been a bit of a Chevrolet specialty, the switch back to cars is indeed exciting as there are all kinds of unexplored niches and possibilities.

The Chevy Spark's boxy design delivers an impressive level of usable volume in the least amount of space. In fact, the car is nearly 15 centimetres taller than a Mini Cooper, but it's slightly shorter overall and offers less distance between the front and rear wheels. With the rear seat in place, you will find only minimal stowage area in back, but accommodating life's bulky items is just a split-folding-rear-bench away.

The rear door handles have been cleverly integrated as part of the window frame, giving the car a two-door appearance. A 1.2-litre, four-cylinder generates an equally modest 85 horsepower and 82 pound-feet of torque. A five-speed manual transmission, or optional four-speed automatic, directs power to the front wheels.

One rung up the ladder, the new five-door Sonic RS model adds some aggression with a unique grille and front fascia, 17-inch wheels with low-profile performance tires, a shiny exhaust and a body that sits about a half-inch lower.

One more notch up is the new Malibu sedan, which is also all about fuel efficiency. For 2013, Chevrolet's mid-size sedan sheds some centimetres between the front and rear wheels, but is wider by nearly eight. The base engine is a 2.5-litre, four-cylinder that makes 197 horsepower.

Also offered is the Malibu Eco that uses General Motors' mild-hybrid system (called eAssist) borrowed from the Buick LaCrosse and Regal. The 182-horsepower, 2.4-litre four-cylinder gas engine works with a belt-driven 15-horsepower electric motor/generator, replacing the traditional alternator. It feeds off of a lithium-ion battery pack positioned behind the rear seat.

Sticking with the small and frugal theme is the new Trax, which slots below the Equinox in Chevy's tall wagon lineup and uses the same platform as that brand's Cruze and Sonic small cars. In size it's nearly 18 centimetres longer and 13 centimetres taller than a Sonic wagon, which provides plenty of space for up to five passengers and a relatively cavernous cargo area.

When it comes to Camaro, "eco" is a handle that just doesn't really fit. New for this 1960s throwback is the 1LE handling package, which was primarily available on Camaro police interceptors in the early 1990s. Now only available for SS models with no changes to the 426-horsepower, 6.2-litre V8, the 1LE gets most of the suspension, braking, bigger wheels and sticky tires that make the ZL1 so entertaining, but without the weight — and cost — of the supercharged engine.

Meanwhile, Corvette is awaiting its 2014 replacement, although for the 2013 model year there is the 427 Convertible Collector Edition that uses the 505-horsepower, 7.0-litre V8 (i.e., 427 cubic inches) from the Z06, an exclusive carbon-fibre hood, fenders and floors, along with the magnetic ride control from the ZR1. Considering that there has never been a Z06 or ZR1 drop-top, the 427 Convertible throws all the tastiest bits of each into one awesome package. Also, every Corvette is available with an optional white-on-blue 60th anniversary design appearance package to celebrate the Corvette's 60th birthday.

– Wheelbase Media

BASE PRICES (INCLUDING DESTINATION)

CAMARO: TWO-DOOR TIME MACHINE — $29,500
CORVETTE: TWO-DOOR COUPE — $61,550
CRUZE: FOUR-DOOR COMPACT SEDAN — $17,200
IMPALA: FULL-SIZE SEDAN — $29,800
MALIBU: MID-SIZED SEDAN — $26,500
SONIC: SUB-COMPACT SEDAN/HATCH — $16,000
SPARK: CITY-CAR HATCHBACK — $15,000
TRAX: COMPACT TALL WAGON — $23,500 (EST.)
VOLT: COMPACT ELECTRIC SEDAN — $43,000

Camaro: Two-door time machine — $29,500

Trax: Compact tall wagon — $23,500 (est.)

Impala: Full-size sedan — $29,800

Corvette: Two-door coupe — $61,550

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See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
The important thing today is that you focus your energy in a single direction. Because if you have more than one target, you will reduce your chances of success. What is your number one goal? Make it your only goal.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may be under the impression that if you don't grab what is being offered, you will miss out or fall behind. That isn't true. You will be more of a success in the long-term if you slow down a bit now.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Jupiter, planet of good fortune, turns direct in your sign today. So there is no reason at all why you should hold back, and every reason why you should surge ahead of the pack. Show your rivals what real speed looks like.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Be careful what you say to colleagues and employers today because if they feel you are being unfair, they may turn against you. If you have to be blunt at least make sure what you say is factually true.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You won't hesitate to point out other people's faults today. In fact once you start, you may find it hard to stop. That's OK but don't forget it works both ways: Expect to have a few of your own failings highlighted.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Jupiter, planet of abundance, turns direct in the rewards and reputation area of your chart, so good things are sure to come your way. Don't worry if that seems to upset some people. They're jealous of your success.

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You can afford to be optimistic and you can afford to believe that the risks you take will pay off — mostly, they will. But even when they occasionally go wrong, it won't be a big deal. You're a winner.

Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
If you are told something of a privileged nature today, you must keep it to yourself. If you let everyone in on the secret you won't be confided in again. In fact, you may in future be the last one to know.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
This looks like an excellent day for partnerships, especially those of a romantic nature. Jupiter in your opposite sign of Gemini will wash away any issues you have with the person you love most.

Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You will get through tasks and chores, both at home and at work, in record quick time today. You're a whirlwind that can't be controlled! Remember though that it's not all about speed. Make a good job of what you do too.

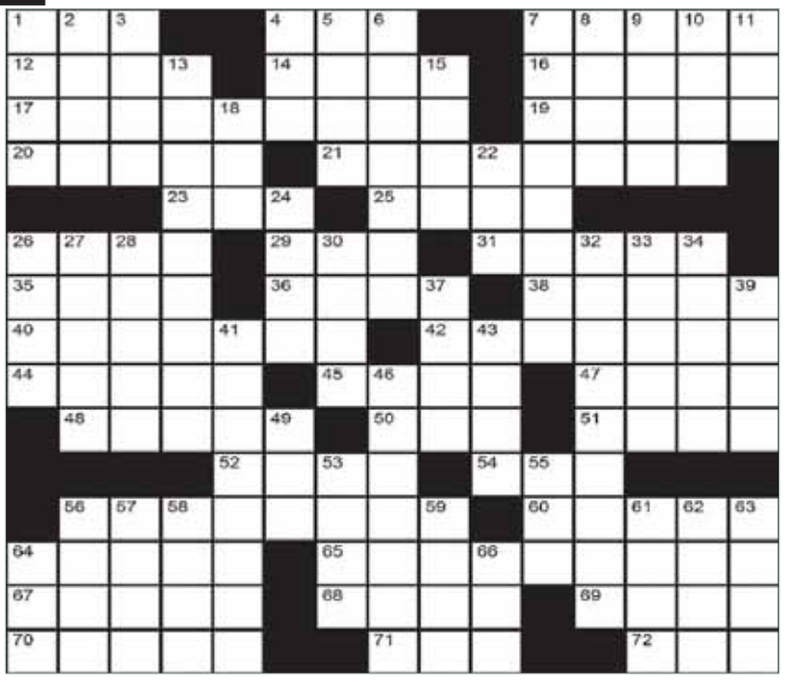
Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Generally speaking, this is still one of the best times of the year for you. But with the Sun at right angles to Saturn today, you may need to watch your back. Do you have a secret enemy? Yes, it seems you do.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You are trying too hard to convince someone that you know what you are talking about. The more you try to persuade them, the more suspicious they get. But why do you need to convince them? Let your actions speak for you.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

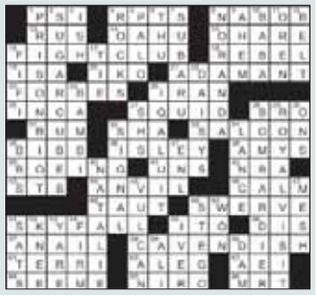
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Incidentally, texting-style
4. Blueprint
7. Big earrings
12. Press
14. Ornamental case
16. 2004 Jude Law movie remake
17. "Sunglasses at Night" singer: 2 wds.
19. 10-cent pieces
20. Van Halen guitarist
21. Born-in-Toronto film legend Mary
23. __ Angeles
25. Popular style of cooking
26. "Holy __!"
29. Work __ sweat: 2 wds.
31. V- and Crew
35. Protest song by #13-Down
36. Laundry fuzz
38. "Dancing with the Stars" alum Ms. Ali
40. Vancouver players
42. Batman foe, The __
44. Rock gig venue
45. Cosmetics company
47. "The Sopranos" actor, Robert __
48. Type of cow
50. TGIF part
51. Back muscles, to a bodybuilder
52. Not found
54. "Voices Carry" by '__ Tuesday
56. Airfield in Afghanistan
60. Nova Scotia's __ Trail
64. More wise
65. Victoria-born artist: 2 wds.
67. 'The Hub' of Nova Scotia
68. "White Flag" songstress
69. Place
70. Designer Calvin
71. Fresh
72. "For shame!"

Down
1. "American Idol" alum Bo
2. Step heavily
3. Microsoft program
4. "Not impressed."
5. _ ___ on the shoulder
6. Prude
7. Canadian astronaut Chris
8. Hodgepodge
9. "Being for the Benefit __ __. Kite!" by The Beatles
10. __ Piper
11. The Outsiders author Ms. Hinton's
13. Crosby, Stills & Nash bandmate, at times: 2 wds.
15. "The Seven Year __" (1955)
18. Royal officer, for short
22. The Sunflower State [abbr.]
24. Pout
26. Dominican Republic city
27. Canadian actress Catherine
28. Classic fabric
30. Famous Tower
32. Cars like Elvis' pink one
33. Harper Lee's To __ _ Mockingbird
34. Rain/snow mix
37. Horse speed
39. Train stn. postings
41. Olympics symbol in Vancouver
43. Research facil.
46. Multi-__
49. "__ _ guy walks into..." (Classic joke intro)
53. Backyard storage
55. Glacial
56. Mr. Malden
57. Fluish feeling
58. Italian saint, Philip __
59. Amusement park feature
61. Decoy
62. Bits of food
63. "Star __
64. 'S' in NYSE, shortened
66. Unhigh

Yesterday's Crossword

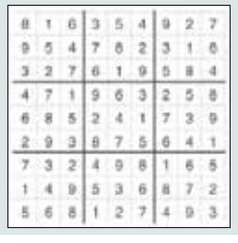


Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

	6		8		1		3	
8								6
		3	7		9	4		
	4		1	8	3		2	
	8						9	
	3		9	7	6		1	
		4	5		2	1		
7								3
	5		6		7		4	

Yesterday's Sudoku



Weather

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
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1920 Bow Trail SW

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